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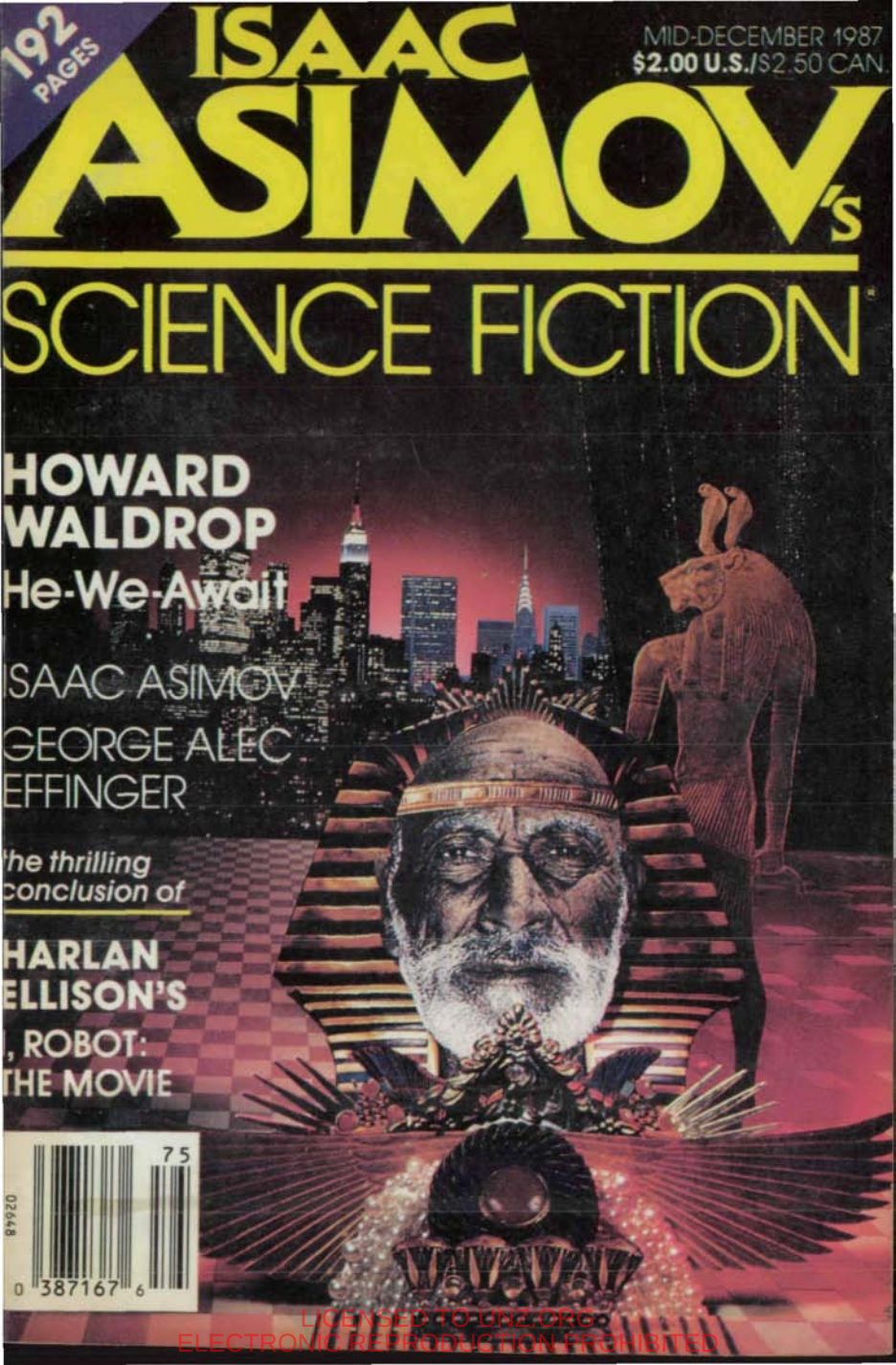

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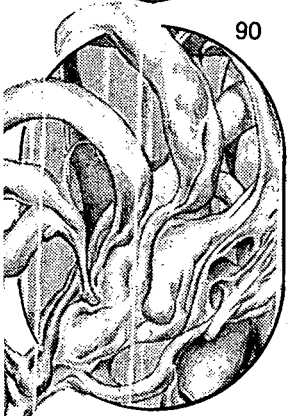

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ISAAC ASIMOV'S SCIENCE FICTION

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EDITORIAL

by Isaac Asimov

ACADEME

According to Greek legend, the ancient Athenian hero, Theseus, once carried off Helen of Sparta, and Helen's brothers, Castor and Polydeuces, went searching for her. Another Athenian, Academus, revealed where she was hidden. For this reason, during the wars between Athens and Sparta, the Spartans always spared the site of the estate of Academus (the "Academeia") whenever they invaded Athenian territory. The Academeia became a symbol of peace in a war-torn time.

The Greek philosopher, Plato, lived near the Academeia and resorted to that pleasant place with his students. There he taught for fifty years and his successors for another eight hundred. Plato's "Academy" (as it is called in English) was the most famous school of antiquity and some schools still call themselves academies today as a result.

The term "academic" is applied to anything pertaining to these academies, particularly to the type of learning they encouraged. Because Plato's philosophy was highly theoretical and abstract and did not concern itself with practical everyday matters, an "academic" question has now come to mean one that has no practical meaning; that is of theoretical interest only.

And "académe" has come to mean the world of scholarship and higher education.

Now that we know what academe means, let me say that as a writer I think that the influence of academe on science fiction is in some ways pernicious. I can say that with a clear conscience because I am a member of academe myself. (To those who don't know, let me explain that I am Professor of Biochemistry at Boston University School of Medicine. I don't work at it because I prefer to write but the title is mine.)

I do not object to those members of academe that are the producing members of our intellectual society—who do research. I certainly do not object to those members of academe who see their prime function as teaching. That is crucially important.

I do, however, object to those members of academe who see their prime function as that of setting literary standards and of serving as literary critics. They irritate me

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for they are intellectual parasites. In fact, I have heard such critics described as fulfilling the role of a eunuch in a harem. They can see what is going on, and they can comment on it, but they lack the equipment to join in the proceedings themselves.

What's more, although their job is to vilify and destroy the work of any writer whose writings they consider to be below their own rarefied standards, heaven help any writer who attempts to answer back. Critics can hand it out freely, with lip-smacking pleasure, but they are furious if they ever find themselves on the receiving end.

What got me started on this was that I received in the mail a copy of a limited, leatherbound edition of Fredric Brown's *What Mad Universe,* first published in 1949 in *Startling Stories*. I promptly reread it with as much pleasure as I had experienced reading it when it first appeared.

At the time, the only people who wrote science fiction were people who loved science fiction, for SF writing in those days could only be done for love. It certainly couldn't be done for money. What's more, we all wrote in "pulp" fashion—lots of exclamation points and action-formula—because that suited the readers. Academe had not yet discovered science fiction, you see, and we were all happy in the gutter. —Poor, but happy.

The introduction to *What Mad Universe* was written by James Gunn, a member of academe, for he

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teaches English at the University of Kansas. However, he knows and *lives* science fiction, for he has written excellent SF of his own and he could undoubtedly make a good living at it if he were as compulsive a writer as I am. In the introduction, Jim defends the pulp-nature of the book and says:

"What is difficult to remember in these days of *avant-garde,* elitist fiction, experimental in style, often obscure, and frequently disdainful of its readers, is that most great literature has been commercial and even formulaic, from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey,* through the Greek drama, Shakespeare, and the English novel, up to relatively recent times."

Whereupon I rose from my chair and waved my arms and yelled, "Attaboy, Jim."

He's right, but the inhabitants of academe, all too often, encourage "avant-garde, elitist fiction, experimental in style, often obscure, and frequently disdainful of its readers" because that separates them from the common herd and allows them to plunge into a little, preciously-arcane world of their own. And many writers find themselves seduced into writing for these critics because they love their praise and fear their blame. Then, embittered by not receiving the wild acclaim from the readers they disdain, they join the critics and strike out at the innocent souls who write science fiction for readers to read.

Even when these literary critics decide to plunge into the mirk of science fiction and try to build a reputation by discussing it (perhaps because they have been crowded out of the critical world of Joyce, Kafka, and Sartre) they can scarcely hide their disdain of it.

James Gunn wrote a short literary biography of me in 1982. It was part of a series of such biographies of science fiction writers and the general editor of the series favored it with an introduction. This editor said of me: "A strong imagination, great energy, combined with literary skills that evolve from the level of apprentice to journeyman but not much farther —that, in a nutshell, is the situation of Isaac Asimov." He goes on to say of me: "Rarely more than adequate in the traditional literary qualities of style, plot, and characterization, he has been superior in the qualities peculiar to science fiction."

What he is saying, in other words, is that I'm a pretty poor writer but that, by good fortune, or shrewd insight, I've managed to find a literary niche in which it doesn't matter if you're a pretty poor writer. Science fiction doesn't need good writing, presumably, because it is an inherently inferior branch of literature.

I can just see his nose wrinkled, his mouth pursed up, and his little finger raised. Now I don't mind his downgrading me as a writer (well, yes, I do, but not very much), but I *do* mind his downgrading science fiction. This kind of patronizing

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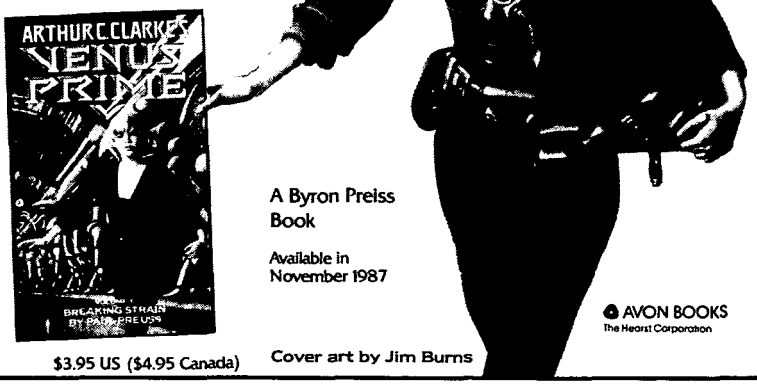

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attention from "scholars" we can do without.

Let me make another point. I am not against experimental, elitist science fiction writing. I would like to make science fiction as broad a field as possible. *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* is an example of what I mean. We do not hesitate to print highly difficult material alongside my own humorously frothful and simple-minded "George and Azazel" stories. We do not hesitate to publish stories that have strong fantasy elements and strong mainstream elements. We like to enlarge readers' experiences and possibly broaden their literary taste in various directions.

That does not mean, however, that we must abandon straightforward story-telling altogether. If you like obscurity, there is no need to make clarity a literary crime. A story need not be burned at the stake for the sin of being comprehensible, and for having a beginning, a middle, and an end. Even a happy ending may be justified under some conditions.

In short, I would like academe to broaden their narrow minds even if they have to use a crowbar to do it. (In fact, I would *like* them to use a crowbar to do it.)

But perhaps they won't. Sometimes it strikes me that the more lofty a person becomes in his own estimation, the more likely he is to lose all traces of common sense.

For instance, a science fiction writer I know, one who receives great critical acclaim, was applying for some grant, and he needed letters of recommendation. Under these conditions, I am usually applied to for such a recommendation because there is a perception that my name is known and that therefore my word will carry weight. (And sometimes it does.)

I have no objection to writing such letters. Most science fiction writers are my friends and I know them to be good writers and to be deserving of help.

This time, however, I paused to read the nominating petition first. I don't know why.

The nominator praised the writer in question very highly. The nominator also explained that the writer needed support because it was impossible to make a reasonable living as a science fiction writer. (At this, I raised my eyebrows in surprise.)

The nominator went on to admit that some people *did* make a reasonable living as science fiction writers, and actually named the names of a few who did, but explained that the writer he was nominating wrote much better than those undeserving rich guys did and naturally made less money in consequence.

So I did *not* write the letter of recommendation. I felt that if one is going to ask a favor, one ought at least to ask politely. ●

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by Roger Zelazny

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Dave Langford

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Brad Foster

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"Gilgamesh in the Outback"
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(IAsfm, July 1986)

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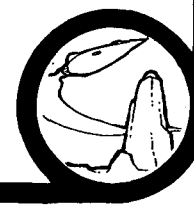

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LETTERS

Hello:

In Charl Phillips' letter in the May *Asimov's* regarding spelling "checker" programs and how they will never take the place of good old-fashioned proofreading, the word "grammar" is misspelled.

Sincerely,

Michael Devich
P.O. Box 659
Lake Isabella, Ca. 93240

P.S. to Dr. Asimov: 'Tis far better to be a great writer and a rotten proofreader than to be a rotten writer and a great proofreader.

I agree with your postscript, and I would wish I could be a great writer and a great proofreader—but proofreading takes a great deal of time which I, for one, don't have. I have to opt for writing, therefore, and leave the proofreading to a professional.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov and Mr. Dozois:

I am writing to congratulate and thank Orson Scott Card for his great novelette "America." As a Brazilian, it is very interesting to me to see the reality and the problems of my country in a story which integrates the panorama of the whole American continent.

However, though I share the ideals of Mr. Card, seeing science fiction with characteristics genuinely Brazilian written by an American, while the science fiction in Brazil is just breaking ground, remains a constraint.

But the Brazilian SF is developing with some authors exercising themselves well. And with names like André Carneiro, known even in the USA.

Thanks again.

Sincerely,

Roberto de Sousa Causo
Caixa Postal 220
Sumaré, Estado de São
Paulo—Brazil
CEP 13170.

My own ambition is to have a flourishing science fiction literature in every country of the world, exhibiting the variations one would expect of varying cultures.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov:

I have read your magazine with considerable pleasure for the past three years and have only good things to say about your publication. However, let me pick a bone with your marketing staff. Today I received in the mail a "you may already be a winner" envelope with a sweepstakes pitch in it for *Isaac*

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Asimov's Science Fiction. Truly, the mundanes have invaded! If I wanted sweepstakes notices, I'd subscribe to *Reader's Digest* or some other equally insipid magazine.

I realize you must make a profit with the magazine, but isn't there some less obnoxious and mundane way of doing it? I personally find sweepstakes notices bothersome and annoying, and they rapidly find their way to the trash can. The notice said I could renew my subscription at a "very special low rate" of eight issues for $11.97. This works out to $1.49 and a few parts of a penny per issue. Your normal subscription rate stated in the front of the magazine is thirteen issues for $19.50; this comes out to $1.50 per issue.

What's so special about the "special low rate"? You save less than a penny per issue with it —hardly a "special" rate at all, and misleading to boot.

Please let your marketing types know that some readers find this approach to marketing irritating and unimaginative. Don't cheapen an extremely fine magazine (and your good name) with such strategies; it smacks of tactics resorted to by magazines found at the grocery check-out line. Certainly your readers deserve better!

Thank you again for an excellent magazine. I will most certainly renew my subscription, and I look forward to each new issue. However, I don't care to find further sweepstakes notices from *Asimov's* in my mail!

Sincerely,

Sally Childs-Helton
Indianapolis, IN

Alas, all methods of trying to drum up subscriptions or encourage good opinions of our efforts tend to be irritating. Nor is it feasible to search out the least irritating, since there is no objective way of deciding that. Some are irritated by this and some by that. All we can do is our best.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov and Mr. Dozois:

I won't tell you that *IAsfm's* quality is unparalleled, and that its editor and staff are the best working in the marketplace to date—because you already know all that. . . .

I just finished reading Lucius Shepard's "The Sun Spider" in the April issue of *IAsfm*, and I was deeply impressed with it. Time and again, Shepard's fiction seems to evoke and trigger what Joseph Campbell, in his book *Primitive Mythology: The Masks of God* refers to as "the innate releasing mechanism" (IRM). These mechanisms are established by experience—not by learning, and the response of the nervous system to "a particular sign stimulus" is immediate and irreversible. Shepard seems to draw the reader into his story, then, in an almost subliminal way, shapes and forms the reader's consciousness, making it more and more vulnerable—to which he then adds the sign stimulus (my IRM was triggered by the passage from *The Resolute Lover*, a mystically beautiful and exquisitely written excerpt that was almost hypnotic in its effect on me; it put me in the exact place that Shepard wanted me for the ending of the tale, which I found truly be-

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lievable, heart-wrenching, and emotionally satisfying).

I haven't been able to find Shepard's *The Weeping Woman* anywhere; is it out of print?

Your partner in wonder,

Peter W. Telep
Holtsville, NY

I assure you that however much we know our own sterling qualities it is always welcome to hear our decisions confirmed by stalwart and perspicacious readers.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov:

I'm writing this to tell you how much I enjoyed George Ewing's "A Little Farther Up the Fox." As an Ernest Hemingway fan I feel this story was written in a manner the Old Master would approve. It has elements of his "Big Two-Hearted River." One minor cavil, however. On the last page of the story by Ewing the author states "famous toreadors were flying in from Mexico. . . ." Sorry, but in Papa Hemingway's noted book *Death in the Afternoon* in the glossary Hemingway states that the term toreador was never used to describe a bullfighter.

I enjoyed Harry Turtledove's story "Superwine" very much, too. I note that there is going to be a hardback novel out soon. As an historian, I never cared for Byzantium, but Mr. Turtledove's writing made it real.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Krieg
Baltimore, MD

I'm afraid that Hemingway's word will never be influential in this respect as long as Georges Bizet and Escamillo are on the other side.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov;

I have been reading your columns monthly almost since they began in *F&SF*, and now twice a month for ten years. The only complaint I have had with your editorials/essays in *IAsfm* has been the appearance of determined Pollyannaism, but if that was your choice, okay.

That made the May editorial, "Spaceflight," even more of a surprise. Thank you for saying what hasn't been said enough. When the Shuttle blew, I figured immediately that the root cause was the long-term misfeasance of the top management: Congress. And since I didn't expect ever to see Congress take responsibility for its own messes, I expected no substantive action.

You have beautifully summarized the discomfiture of nonmilitaristic space enthusiasts, and one of the most important arguments against the venal Star Wars lunacy. I expect this letter to be among others frothing and foaming in opposition . . . I only hope enough people have enough feeling for democracy, and enough ability to apply intellect to their passions, to halt this possibly final military-industrial fantasy.

SMI²LE,

Neil Rest
5309 N. Clark
Chicago IL 60640

It's easy to blame Congress; they're everybody's favorite target. The ex-

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ecutive branch is not free of blame, particularly presidents with both eyes on re-election and on their place in history and the back of their elbow to the public good; to say nothing of bottom-line industrialists and an apathetic public.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov, Mr. Dozois, and Co:

Now, please understand that my love of science fiction was kindled when, at the ripe age of twelve, I stumbled upon *The Earthsea Trilogy* and was so carried away I proceeded to devour every Ursula Le Guin book in the public library. It was only after I had depleted the shelves of unread Le Guin that I ventured to try some of the other names in the scifi racks and to forage through the big scary boxes of my dad's *Analog* collection in the basement. I have never shaken that pre-teen adoration I developed years ago—many of Ms. Le Guin's stories will always be among my personal favorites (I have to brush away a couple of tears every time I read "The Stars Below"), and so . . . when I noticed from her letter in the April issue that Ursula Le Guin is reading your magazine, I just wondered . . . well, I thought . . . just maybe . . . I could get away with this: "Hi, Ms. Le Guin! Hi! You're a fantastic author! Thank you so much!"

Since I'm writing anyway, I'd like to comment on one other thing. I really like those little pictures you put in to kill space on occasion. My particular favorite is the little toad face with pointy ears. The two dinosaurs are all right—nothing like something prehistoric to finish off a good story. The various other world landscapes and space shots serve as a nice reminder that this is, after all, a science fiction mag and not *Time* or *Rolling Stone* or something. I don't understand the horseback guy although he seems terribly romantic, and the nude insect lady is interesting. I'm not too keen on the alien lady in space but I'm sure she appeals to someone. And of course, there's always the Good Doctor's head. Don't misunderstand me when I tell you every time I reach one of those I have to stifle a giggle. I mean, I've just come to the end of another story with that goodly, warm, sated feeling beginning to settle over me when Ahhhh! It's Dr. Asimov's disembodied head floating around the bottom of the page! and Ahhhhh! He's surrounded by alien beings!! Ahhhh!! Ahhhhh!! AHHHH!!

Thank you for a truly enjoyable magazine!

Sincerely,

Cindy Rozeboom
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada

Actually, in real life, I often feel surrounded by alien beings. Or perhaps they're normal and I'm the alien.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov,

It was the greatest pleasure to read "Flowers of Edo" in the May issue. Thank you! Thank you for having the good sense and good taste to take such a fine story set in such a different culture and share it with us.

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More than that, however, as much as I love things Japanese, is the fact that it is such finely written *literature*. I have read it ten times now, and know I would take as much pleasure reading it an eleventh time, because it is that rare commodity in literature (I almost add "especially science fiction literature"): the finely crafted story setting forth an intriguing theme rich with deep cultural and cross-cultural harmonies and ironies. Amazing!

What really amazes me is that you manage to include this kind of work in at least every third issue. For example, Walter Jon Williams' "Wolf Time" (January), was *finely crafted* and, while not nearly as rich in undertones as "Flowers of Edo," nonetheless sustained an almost poetic richness of language and image and plot that continued to delight upon several re-readings. (Although I must add the last paragraph was a nod toward mediocrity.)

I grew up on science fiction, and I love it all. Rarely, however, do I enjoy reading something more than twice—not unless a lot of years have passed. Many times I only read once, lightly, relieved to get to the end, having only just *barely* enjoyed myself—because the surprise at the ending was so *obvious* and pathetically *contrived,* or the emotions of the principals so *adolescent,* or the science involved so patently *banal* or *absurd,* or (and this is where science fiction is a rank bedfellow of all pulps, whatever the genre) the craft of the writer so hopelessly *sophomoric.* Some mags are more to blame for printing this sort of drivel than others. *This mag,* however, joy of joys, is only half filled with drivel each month, the rest are competent works, and, as I said, every third issue there is a story that is a joy to behold and a positive pleasure to read and re-read and re-read—"Flowers of Edo" could easily be in any anthology of fine modern world literature and should be in at least one. *Keep up the good work—you are the cutting edge in science fiction—stories that hold up just as well as fine literature as fine science fiction.*

Sincerely yours,

Charles A. Knouse
Haverhill, MA

You are a difficult man to please, but I suppose that you intend to praise us by describing us as only half-filled with drivel. Has it occurred to you that there is simply not enough non-drivel produced (by your standards) or enough non-driveling writers to fill a magazine every four weeks?

—Isaac Asimov

Dr. Asimov:

Your enthusiasm, expressed in "Spaceflight," regarding the space program is, in my opinion, somewhat misplaced. I agree (despite all of the disappointments you mentioned, which I share) that space travel will most likely play a major role in the future of humanity—but *now* is most emphatically *not* the time to pursue this.

Space travel must wait, I believe, until some of our problems here on Earth are ironed out. For instance, instead of having our great scientific minds working on how a man

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might survive on Mars, why not devote them to the problems of growing crops on infertile lands? Starvation here on Earth is an immediate and pressing problem, while we can afford to put spaceflight on the back burner for a while.

Space exploration can, indeed, *must* be shelved for a while so that we may deal with more urgent problems. This is particularly true if rockets are to be used as they are being used now—glamorous advertisements for the U.S. government which don't actually accomplish anything new, but simply repeat an already-performed experiment for tourists and sightseers. Save the show-biz until humanity's troubles have been at least partially dealt with.

Yours,

Jeremy Osner
Modesto, CA

Does it occur to you that some of our problems may be more easily solved if we gain the knowledge and abilities that will come with space exploration? If we waited till all our problems on Earth are solved before we move outward, we will be waiting forever. As would Columbus.

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Isaac:

I seem to be all over the pages of your letter column suddenly. May I have a little space to reply?

Ed Rush, in the March issue, objects to my having left some questions about Hell unanswered in "Gilgamesh in the Outback." The reason, of course, is that there will be more stories of Gilgamesh in Hell; the second may well have appeared in *IAsfm* by the time this does, and others will follow. I don't guarantee to resolve all the puzzles I've strewn around, but I'll do my best.

In the same issue Daniel Krasner points out that it was Clodius Pulcher, and not Julius Caesar, who spied on Caesar's wife Pompeia during the rites of the Bona Dea. Yes, indeed. Exactly how I came to twist things around like that is something I don't quite know. Obviously the anecdote rearranged itself somewhat in my memory. Which can happen to the best of us, but writers, like Caesar's wife, need to be above reproach, and I regret the error.

Reader George Nelson, in the February issue, complains that I have offended him and even shown a lack of honesty by depicting a character—the fictional Robert E. Howard—who felt shock and confusion at his discovery of unexpected homosexual feelings, and another—the fictional Gilgamesh—whose response to being on the receiving end of such feelings was shock and disgust. (The real Robert E. Howard, so far as I know, had no homosexual leanings, and the Sumerian Gilgamesh texts make the point that there was no physical component to Gilgamesh's deep friendship with his companion Enkidu.)

The writer's responsibility is to the truth of his characters, not to the sexual preferences of his readers. Besides, pleasing all readers at once is a fool's task, and a story containing only nice characters who observe the strictly politically correct social attitudes of the moment

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"Jeter has the brain-burned intensity of his mentor, Philip K. Dick." —*Village Voice*

Infernal Devices

K.W. Jeter

author of THE GLASS HAMMER

It all begins when the Brown Leather Man, a mysterious being with a secret older than humankind, asks George Dower, a proper Victorian gentleman, to repair a device George's father had created years before.

How was George to know that it was just one of the many infernal devices created by his genius father? Who would have guessed that soon his highly proper life is about to be complicated with clockwork automatons, unearthly cults, planet-destroying machines and a cast of ever-changing characters?

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will find few admirers. There are plenty of men in this world who would react with shock at finding unexpected homosexual desires within themselves, or with disgust at finding themselves the target of such desires, and I make no apologies for depicting these two characters in particular in that way. The historical Robert E. Howard obviously had complicated sexual feelings of all sorts, deeply repressed. The historical Gilgamesh was a king at a time when homosexuality was, I suspect, punishable by death. If Gilgamesh doesn't admire what we now call gays, that's his business, not mine, and I reject Mr. Nelson's charge of a lack of honesty with some annoyance. I suppose he would have preferred me to append a footnote to the passage in which Howard speaks of "feeble limp-wristed sodomites who reveled in filth and wanton evil," pointing out that Howard's loaded rhetoric is to be deplored by all enlightened and tolerant modern people, or one explaining that Gilgamesh's distaste for "a man who will embrace a man in the fashion of men and women" is in fact a short-sighted and shallow attitude. But I'm a novelist whose job is to depict a variety of characters, not a political pamphleteer with a socio-sexual agenda to promote.

Best,

Bob Silverberg
Oakland, CA

Bob, readers are always confusing the views expressed by characters in a story with those of the writer. Someone wrote to me indignantly just the other day as to why I decided to accept the concept of Galaxia in Foundation's Edge. *I replied by saying "I didn't accept it. Golan Trevize, the hero of the novel, accepted it. Go ask him."*

—Isaac Asimov

Dear Dr. Asimov and Mr. Dozois:

I must say from the outset that I enjoy your magazine a great deal, but not as much as in the past. One of the original reasons I subscribed to *IAsfm* was the occasional humorous story, and yes, I even liked the hideous puns published during Mr. Scithers' tenure as editor. Now, it seems that even *Mooney's Module* has deserted me.

Not that I don't like "serious" science fiction—but *IAsfm* used to be such a reliable source of the humorous variety that I confess I took it for granted. Obviously you cannot publish material that is not being submitted; however, since you have as of late published very little in this sub-genre, perhaps the impression exists among authors that you *won't* publish it.

Perhaps our Beloved Editor could clarify his position on this material?? I would be ecstatic to open an issue of *IAsfm* and find that horrid puns, such as the Feghoot series and funny SF of the quality of the Sharon Webb "Bull Run" stories, etc. had made a comeback.

George D. Madison
Claremont, CA

Personally, I like humorous stories, too, which is why I write the "George and Azazel" stories. You don't mention them. Not funny enough?

—Isaac Asimov

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Dear Dr. Asimov:

Some nineteen years ago, when I was about fourteen, a good friend of mine urged me to read a science fiction book. It was by Arthur C. Clarke, and called *The Sands of Mars*. This led to my discovering the rest of Clarke's books, as well as to *Pebble in the Sky* and most of your work, as well as to Heinlein and Sturgeon and Silverberg and Aldiss and a fairly new guy named Larry Niven and so on. We read *F&SF* and *Analog* and each tried writing some things of our own. Then—well, a lot of things changed. End of chapter.

Until about a year ago, when that same old friend, Charles G. McGraw, urged me to read *The Mote in God's Eye*. For several reasons the timing was right, and it brought me back full circle to where (and what) I'd once started. I reread the old stuff, and am gobbling up much of the new stuff, which brings us, at last, to your recent editorial, "New Writers," and "the principle of the immobility of success."

First, I do like the new writers, the current styles, settings, outlook; the "humanists," the "cyberpunks," the realism in and of the stories themselves. Nevertheless, though they offer much that "old wave" science fiction did not, there is some element lacking, for better or for worse, that I encounter in abundance when I go back and read "Nightfall" or "The Sentinel." Or, as importantly, when I go ahead and read *The Songs of Distant Earth* or *Foundation and Earth* (both of which were written just like the old days, perhaps yours even more so than Clarke's). This element is hard to describe, but I like to think of it as more "reader-friendly."

Vladimir Nabokov has said that there are three things which a writer must be: storyteller, teacher, enchanter. "A major writer combines all three . . . but it is the enchanter in him that predominates and makes him a major writer." He did not necessarily mean this to apply to "old wave" sci-fi writers, but I do.

So, let people like Connie Willis and Walter Jon Williams blaze indispensable new trails, and may you and your peers keep accepting and perpetuating "the principle of the immobility of success" (while I aspire to work somewhere in the middle, as befits me). Today's writers are keeping science fiction love affairs alive everywhere, and yesterday's are there to remind us why we fell in love in the first place.

Thanks.

Sincerely,

Mark Andrew Garland
Syracuse, NY

PS: Contrary to what the New York *Times* book review would have us believe, *Foundation and Earth does* stand on its own.

Well, thank you. The literary critics may not realize this, but I am perfectly aware that my stories are written in the style of the 1940s and 1950s. That's what I happen to like, and I am perfectly willing to leave cyberpunk, while it lasts, to the new kids on the block. What pleases me most, though, is that I not only get approval from old-timers but also from you, who hadn't been born when I wrote "Nightfall."

—Isaac Asimov

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GAMING

by Matthew J. Costello

The other day I was trying to remember the attraction of role-playing games.

Somehow, midst the hordes of beady-eyed teenaged dice rollers that gather at game conventions, I forgot. The memory, the feel of it, was . . . well, gone.

So I made an effort to remember, to see if I could, for a moment, recapture just what was so damn interesting about these silly role-playing games.

(And please pay attention here if you're among those who deride such pastimes. Ignorance isn't always bliss.)

Then, at last, I remembered.

It was quite simple, really. A role-playing game is a group of people playing together, with a common set of guidelines, to live out an adventure of the imagination. And, if you're lucky enough to have your imagination operating at high enough revs, you can come away from a game session with something almost like an honest-to-God memory.

Of wolves lurking near your small campfire, licking their chops. Of the smell of leather vests and hearty ale. Of deadly traps and pig-faced guards. Of dragons.

(And sure, dungeons too.)

Unfortunately, role-playing demands time. Late nights and mucho beer and chips. When children invaded my and my friends' lives, the days of hit points and saving throws were left behind.

And while I occasionally test new game systems, role-playing as a pastime would seem to be behind me. But when I remembered, really remembered what it was like, it sent me gathering up recent role-playing module releases to see what I was missing. I started, naturally enough, with TSR.

TSR's current success probably rests more on the *All My Children* game and *The Honeymooners Game* than *Dungeons and Dragons*. But the variety and quality of their modules have grown over the years.

Faerie Mound of Dragonkind, a "Catacombs" book, is a large-scale solitaire adventure with over a thousand entries. The large format (8½ × 11), simple game rules, and attractive character cards make this adventure especially inviting.

Dave Arneson, one of the creators of *Dungeons and Dragons*, has brought his legendary Blackmoor campaign to TSR. *City of the Gods* is an adventure featuring a magical flying egg and the evil monks of the Order of the Frog. Aaron

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Alston, once the editor of *Space Gamer* magazine, has written *The Grand Duchy of Karameikos*, a rich resource book for dungeon masters seeking to create that sense of wonder that a finely developed game world can bring.

Chaosium's *Call of Cthulu* was one of my main role-playing passions. *Call of Cthulu* crafted H.P. Lovecraft's cosmic horrors into an award-winning role-playing game. Games Workshop of England recently released *Green and Pleasant Land* (with a cover featuring a serpentine figure curling around a stray croquet ball). The module provides adventures and background for horrors in the UK circa 1920-1930.

Special interest role-playing games have drawn a big audience. Fans of *Ghostbusters* can sample *Scared Stiffs* (from West End Games), an adventure that takes place at the First Annual Supernatural Conclave and Ski Party Weekend.

(Honest!)

Mayfair's DC Heroes has recently released a module based on Alan Moore's *Watchmen* mini-series. The twelve-issue comic was optioned for a film by Twentieth Century Fox midway through its run. The grim, realistic world of over-the-hill costumed heroes is nicely captured by the module.

For fans of the post-apocalypse, Game Designers Workshop has *Going Home* for its role-playing system, *Twilight: 2000*. And Steve Jackson Games, while planning fantasy and science fiction releases for *GURPS* (its generic role-playing game), plunges on with *Son of Toon*—more *cwazy* adventures for its cartoon role-playing game.

Alas, most of the above I can only read. Time is not the abundant quantity it once was. Enter, therefore, the Computer.

With games like *Ultima* (Origin Systems, Inc.) and *Wizardry* (SirTech) available, anyone with access to a Commodore 64, an IBM PC, or an Apple can lead a hearty band of adventurers once more into the fray. And when the dinner bell sounds, all you have to do is hit the "save" button.

(And I just wonder, what with VCRs, super home-entertainment systems, and computer games, are church suppers a thing of the past?)

Legacy of the Ancients, released by Electronic Arts at the summer Consumer Electronics Show, is a particularly good computer role-playing adventure, with exciting graphics and great sound effects. You'll hear your party's ten-league boots as they squish their way across the swamp. The summer CES also brought the announcement that Strategic Simulations Inc. would be producing a licensed *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* computer role-playing game.

Good news. But it still won't be the same as matching wits with a group of people, everyone laughing, spilling beer, and fighting their way through orcs and skeleton warriors to the jackpot of a lifetime. ●

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HE-WE-AWAIT

by Howard Waldrop

art: Terry Lee

Since 1969, Howard Waldrop has sold over seventy short stories. These have appeared in magazines such as *Analog*, *Crawdaddy*, *Playboy*, and *Omni*, and some have been collected into two books: *Howard Who?* (Doubleday 1986) and *All About Strange Monsters of the Recent Past: Neat Stories by Howard Waldrop* (Ursus Books 1987). His novelette, "The Ugly Chickens," won the 1981 Nebula and World Fantasy Awards. We are pleased that *IAsfm* now has the chance to showcase one of Mr. Waldrop's excellent tales, and hope that it won't be long before we can bring another one to you.

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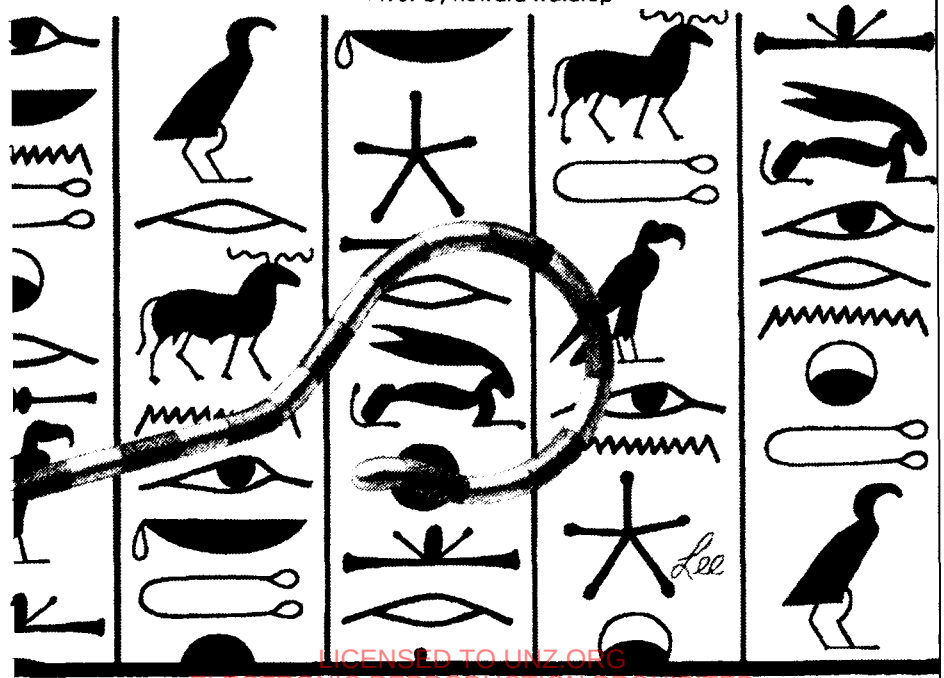

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"In the king-list of Manetho, an Egyptian priest who wrote in Greek in the Third Century B.C., two names are missing.

They were Pharaohs, father and son. The father, Sekhemet, by legend reined one hour less than 100 years. Sekhemetmui, his son, a sickly child born to him in the ninety-first year of his rule, lived less than a year after his father's kingship ended.

I did not say "after his father died". No one knows what happened to Sekhemet. Herodotus, who was initiated by the priests into the Mysteries of Osiris, does not mention either father or son in his list, giving credence to some kind of sacerdotal conspiracy.

A stele, found in an old temple of Sekhmet, had the name of Sekhemet defaced in one of the periods of revision by later kings. The broken and incomplete stele tells of a great project undertaken in his 99th regnal year: 10,000 men set out upriver in 600 boats built for the expedition. Then history is quiet.

That a century of human life in this time-and-death haunted land are represented only by carvings on a broken rock is a reminder of all that has been lost to us for want of a teller."

—Sir Joris Ivane
From the Raj to the Pyramids
Chatto and Pickering, 1888

Always, always were the voices and the cool valley wind.

Ninety-seven times he had made the journey down the River to pray to Hapi, his brother-god, for a good flood. Hapi had been kind eighty-six times and had not denied his prayers for the last nine years in a row, since the birth of his last, his crippled son.

Sekhemet, Beloved of Sekhmet, Mighty-Like-The-Sun and Smiter of the Vile and Wretched Foreigner, stood with his retinue on the broad road before his great white house.

Around him was the city he had caused to be built fifty years before, white and yellow in the morning sun. The shadows of the buildings stretched toward the River. Down at the wharf the royal barque was being outfitted for its trip southward up the waters.

Across the Nile were the mastabas of his fathers, and of those before them, cold and grey lumps in the Land of the Dead on the western bank. Here his ancestors slept, their *kas* prayed for, sacrifices offered them, as just in their sleeps as in their lives.

Sekhemet looked back to the balcony of the great house, where his lastborn Sekhemetmui stood watching him. A strange boy, born so twisted and so late, sired in his hundredth year of life, his ninety-first of kingship. Sekhemet did not understand him or his ways.

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"The work on the barque awaits your inspection," whispered his chief scribe to him.

Always, always were the voices, more and more voices the older he became, quieter but more insistent.

His ancestors, who had fought up and down the length of the River, had had an easier time of it: uniting the Bee Kingdom and the Reed Kingdom, bringing the Hawk Kingdom under their sway. They had been men and women of action—war pressed on every side, treachery behind every doorway, quick thinking was needed.

Sekhemet had reigned ninety-seven years. All his wars were won while he was still young. Anyone who could offer him treason had long ago been scattered on the desert winds.

The retinue—Sekhemet, his scribes, guards, bearers, and slaves—began its walk in the city he had built across from the tombs of his fathers. His own mastaba was being constructed in the shadow of his father's. The workmen ferried across the River each morning well after sunup and returned long before dark. No one wanted to be caught on the west bank after nightfall.

So it was that they walked in orderly progress, all eyes of persons they met downcast at sight of them, until they happened by the temple of the protecting god of the city, Sekhmet—she with the hippopotamus-head.

There was a commotion at the temple door—it flew open and the doorkeepers fell back. For, coming out of the courtyard, his garments torn, was the high priest, eyes wild and searching.

He shambled toward them.

"Oh Great House!" he yelled. The guards turned toward him, spears at ready. The priest flung himself to the ground, tasting the dirt, his shaven head smeared with ash from the temple fire. "It is revealed to us—wonderful to relate!—a great thing. A few moments ago, a novice, an unlettered boy from the Tenth Nome—but, it is too marvelous!" The priest looked around him, blinking, seeming to regain his composure. He bowed down.

"Oh Great House! Oh Mighty-Like-The-Sun, forgive me! Sekhmet has given a revelation. We come to you this evening in full pomp. Forgive me!" He backed on his knees to the doorway of the temple, bowing and scraping.

Shaken, his heart pounding like the feet of an army at full run, Sekhemet, Smiter of the Vile and Wretched Foreigner, continued on his way to the royal docks.

After the revelation given by the priests a great flotilla was built. Hundreds of ships were loaded with clothing and tools; provisions of

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garlic, bread, onions and radishes were laid in, jugs of lily-beer trundled aboard. Work on the mastaba across the water stopped.

The armada was filled with slaves and workmen, artisans, scribes, bureaucrats, and soldiers. The ships set out one gold morning following the royal barge up the River.

Somewhere on the long journey south the flotilla put in, for the royal barque carrying Sekhemet and his son Sekhemetmui came alone to Elephant Island where the Pharaoh made his prayers to Hapi and then returned northward.

Nothing was heard of the expedition for a year. The government was run by dispatches sent from somewhere southward of the city on the River.

At the end of the year the royal barge appeared once more at Elephant Island; again Sekhemet and his son supplicated to Hapi for a good flood with its life-giving *kemi*. Those of the island's temple who viewed Sekhemet said he looked younger and more fit than in years, transfigured, glowing with some secret knowledge.

Then the barque returned northward down the River. It was the last time the old Pharaoh was seen.

Nine months later a small raft came to the dock of the increasingly-troubled royal city. Foreigners impinged on the frontiers, there was rebellion in the Thirteenth Nome, the flood had not been as great as in earlier years and famine threatened the Canopic delta.

On the raft were one priest and the son of the old Pharaoh, Sekhemetmui. He was eleven years old and bore on his stunted breast the tablet of succession.

In a few days he was accoutered with the Double Crown of Red Egypt and White Egypt and became Sekhemetmui "The Glory of Sekhmet is Revealed" and Mighty-Like-The-Sun.

He had been a sickly child. Troubles came in waves, inside his body and out. There was fighting in the streets of the capital. He reigned for less than six months, dying one night of terrible sweats while a great battle raged to the east.

He was put into the hastily-finished mastaba across the River which had been started for his father.

Four hundred years after his death his city was a forgotten ruin and many miles down the River the first of the great pyramids rose up into the blue desert sky.

In the empty temple of Sekhmet there was a stele devoted to the old Pharaoh. On it were carved the signs: "I, Sekhemet, shall live to see the sun rise 5000 years from now; my line shall reign unto the last day of mankind."

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* * *

How it was usually done:

The body of a dead person would be taken to the embalmer-priests by the grieving family, their heads plastered with mud, their bodies covered with dust.

The priest would demonstrate to them, using a small wooden doll, the three methods of embalming from the cheapest to the most expensive. In the case of a Pharaoh it would always be the latter.

Then the family would leave and go into seventy days of mourning.

One of the embalmer-priests would be chosen by lot. He would take a knife of Ethiopian flint and with it cut into the left side of the body just below the ribs. The other priests would scream and wail; the chosen priest would drop the knife and run for his life. The others pursued, throwing stones in an effort to kill him, such was their belief about the desecration of a body, and ran him from The House of Death.

Then they would return and dig the brains out of the corpse through the nose with a curved iron hook, procuring most of it in this manner. Then they would pump in a solution of strong cedar oil into the brain cavity and plug the nose and throat.

Other priests reached in through the knife-wound and took out the internal organs, placing them in jars with distinctive tops. In the man-headed jar went the stomach and large intestines. Into the dog-headed they put the small intestines; the jackal-headed vessel got the lungs and heart, and into the hawk-headed went the liver and gall bladder. The jars were sealed with bitumen and capped with plaster.

Into the body cavity they stuffed aromatic spices, gums, oils, resins, and flowers, then they sewed the wound closed. They placed the body in a trough of natrum for sixty-nine days, taking it out only to unplug the nose and allow the rest of the brains to run out. They spent the night wrapping the body in linen strips soaked in gum, and placing it in its wooden coffin, which always had eyes painted on it so the soul, or *ka*, of the dead could see.

On the morning of the seventieth day the mummy and jars of organs were given back to the family for burial. For Pharaohs this usually meant a resting place in some tomb or mastaba on the Libyan bank of the Nile, the land of the setting sun and of the dead.

None of this happened to Sekhemet.

When a ruler of Egypt wanted sherbet with his meal next day, word went out to the royal works.

An hour before dawn next morning, several hundred slaves would enter a building divided into hundreds of high-walled roofless cubicles open to the desert air.

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The slaves went to the center of the cubicles, from the floor of which rose a pillar six feet tall and a few inches in diameter. At its top was a shallow depression, the rim only a fraction of an inch above the bottom of the concavity. Into this tiny bowl the slave sprinkled a drop of water and smoothed it into a film.

Each slave did this in several rooms, and there were hundreds of them.

The temperature of the desert floor never dropped below 34° F. But a few feet off the ground the air, shielded from any wind by the high thick walls, was colder.

Royal attendants, with a thin spoon made of reed and bearing triple-walled bowls, waited outside the rooms a few moments. Entering them and working quickly, turning their heads to avoid breathing in the pillar's direction, they scraped a fingernail of frost from each pillar-top into the bowls.

Going from room to room, each gathered the ice. The many tiny scrapings were placed in one bowl, covered over, closed and packed in datewood sawdust and carried to Pharaoh's house.

A few moments before it was to be served it was flavored, one or two small portions to the ruler, his wife, his eldest child and one or two highly-favored guests.

These iceworks, three or four acres in extent, were usually found near the palaces.

Early in the twentieth century A.D., an iceworks was discovered far to the south, where no large cities had ever stood. It covered seventy-two acres and contained eleven thousand cubicles, each with the wonder-working silent pillars.

THE HOUSE OF THE *KA*: I

. . . further into the valley. Perhaps my house will not prove to be safe, will be found out, my resting place defiled, my temple defaced. Surely, though, the priests will not let this happen.

Their hands on me like so many clubs. No pain, just sensation, pressure, as if it were happening to someone else. Things I cannot see.

What if the priests are wrong? Is it possible they tell me these things to put me out of the way? They know my son to be weak: if trouble comes he will not be able to hold the Bee Kingdom and the Reed Kingdom together—the nomarchs of the Delta are too shrewd, as they have always been.

What if they have done these things to be rid of my strength? The thought comes to me now—all their talk, the revelation that I go away from the light to wake to a kingdom my line will rule forever . . .

What madness is this I have done? Guards, to me! Let me up, I say! Take your hands from my divinity!

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I cannot move. The cold has seeped through me.

What if the priests do not keep their word? I am lost. My *ka* will be dispersed: I am not dead. They have seduced me, deposed me with only words, words of power and glory I could not resist.

Was ever such a fool on the River Nile?

Now there is no more light, no more feeling. All ebbs, all flows away.

Gods. Sekhmet. Protect me. Thoth, find me not wanting on the scales. Let your baboons weigh me true.

The madness of priests . . .

Outside they came and went, some by design, some because they were lost.

At first they spoke the Old Language, or the black tongue of the south, and the barbaric speech from the northeast. Then they used the long foreign sounds unknown in his time, from far across the salt water, Greek, then the rolling Latin.

Then there were desert languages, and those twisted Latin speech patterns of French and Anglo-Norman, the gutturals of German; Italian and Turkish, then French, English, German again, English, all against the old desert speech.

They brought their gods with them in waves; Shango, Baal, Yahweh, Zeus, Jupiter, Allah and Mohammed, Dieu, Gott, God and Jesus, Jesu, Gott again, Allah, Allah, Money.

Twice people tried to get in—once by accident. They were crushed by a four-ton block balanced by pebbles, one of six. The second intrusion was by design, but when they saw the powdered skeletons of the first they turned away, fearing one, two, ten more deadfalls ahead.

Once there was a tremor in the earth and the remaining blocks fell, leaving a clear passage. Once, water fell from a cloud in the sky.

From inside the sounds—voices, earthquakes, rain, deadfall, praises to gods, the sighing of the gentle dusty wind, the slosh and swing of the Nile itself, the groaning of the earth on its axle-tree—were as the long quiet ticks of a slow, sure, well-oiled metronome.

The man ran through the gates of the small town clutching parchment scrolls to him as he stumbled.

Behind him came the drumming of camels' hooves, the clang of their harness bells. The cries of the desert people leaped up behind him.

The running man was old; his head was shaven and his face hairless. He ran by the broken and tumbled buildings that had once housed the Christian desert fathers, deserted for more than two centuries.

He fell. One of the scrolls broke into powdery slivers under his hand. He cried out and pulled the others to him.

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He looked over his shoulder. The camels were closer. Black-garbed riders, swords out, bore down on him. Eyes wild, he ran behind the broken legs of a statue of Dionysus, trying to climb the jumbled stones of a small amphitheater. He saw far out to his left the ribbon of the Nile, beyond the date-palm orchards. He yelled in his anguish.

The riders surrounded him, their camels spitting and stamping. One of them dismounted from his knee-walking animal, swinging up his sword. He held out his hand.

Weeping, the old man turned the scrolls over to him.

He had been at Alexandria when they came out of the Northeast in black flowing waves, putting all who resisted their holy war to sword and fire. He saw them capture the city and tear down the idols. He followed them to the Great Library. He had wept when they began carrying out hundreds and thousands of books and scrolls and took them to burn to heat the public baths—enough parchment and papyrus and leather to keep them steaming for six weeks.

He had come as quickly as he could to this town, the site of the old temple, for these scrolls. He was the only one of the Society of He-We-Await who had made it this far. No one had disturbed their resting place. But he had been seen as he left the ruins and the cry had gone up.

"These scrolls," one of the mounted men leaned forward and spoke in a thick language the old man hardly understood. "If they contradict the *Koran,* they are heathen. If they support it, they are superfluous."

The man on the ground opened one, then another, looked at them, puzzled. He handed them up to the one who had spoken.

"They are in the old, old writing," he said. "They are infidel." He handed them back to the swordsman on the ground.

With no trace of emotion, and some effort, the man jumped up and down on them, grinding them to fine shards which sifted away on the breeze.

"We have no time to light a fire," said the mounted leader, "But that will do. Your conversion will come later. First, the books, then the hearts of men."

They turned their camels and sped back toward the wattle-walled village.

Crying, the old man sank down in the mingled dust of writings and bricks, wailing, gnashing his teeth, rubbing his bald head with handfuls of sand.

In the late nineteenth century A.D. artifacts of an especially good quality surfaced on the antiquities market.

The Cairo Museum, responsible for all Egyptian archaeological work, investigated.

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They found that a graverobbing family from Deir el Bahrani, near the Valley of the Kings, had made a discovery in the cliffs behind Queen Hatsepshut's tomb about a decade before.

The majority of the tombs which had been uncovered in the Valley had proved empty of goods, the coffins missing their contents.

The graverobbers had found, in a shaft dug into the cliff wall above Deir el Bahrani, a forgotten chapter of history.

There was a marker there, hastily carved, a great quantity of goods from many dynasties, and thirty-six mummies.

The marker told the story—in one of the lawless periods before the XXIst Dynasty, the government fell apart, bandits roamed the towns, foreigners attacked from all sides. The priests could no longer guard the tombs in the Valley of the Kings.

Secretly they entered the mausoleums, took out the royal mummies and brought them to the hidden tunnel, with such of the grave goods as they could carry, and secreted them away, hoping their bodies, and the *kas* of the royal lines, would be safe from marauders.

Of the thirty-six mummies, one—Thutmose the IIIrd—had been broken into three pieces. The others were intact, including those of Ramses the Great; Ahmose; Queen Ahmes, the mother of Hatsepshut; and Thutmose the Ist and IInd. The rest were eventually identified, except one. That of a very young boy about twelve years of age, in wrappings of a much earlier period than the others. He was entered in the catalogue of the Museum, where the mummies were all taken, as "Unknown Boy (I-IIIrd Dynasty?)."

Doctor Tuthmoses looked at the final reports. They were magnetometer scans of the west bank of the Nile, from the Delta, past Aswan to the influx of the Atbara River above the Fifth Cataract, far longer than the extent of the kingdoms of the early dynasties.

All the known tombs were marked; all the new ones found had been checked and proved to be those of later dynasties, of minor officials. The search had gone much further out of the Valley than any burials ever found. Still nothing.

He looked around him at the roomful of books. He was now an old man. There were others devoted to the cause, younger men, but none like him. They were content to sift over the old data again and again, the way it had always been done since the knowledge of the resting place was lost twelve centuries before.

He had devoted fifty years of his life to the quest, through wars, panics, social upheaval, and unrest. He had seen his mentor, Professor Ramra, grown old and weak, and embittered, die, with nothing to show for *his* sixty years of diligent search but more paper, more books, more clutter.

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Tuthmoses rang the bell for his secretary, young Mr. Faidul. He came in, thin and dapper in a three-piece suit.

"Faidul," he said. "The time has come to change our methods. Take this down as a record for the Society.

"One: Obtain the best gene splicer possible for a two-day clandestine assignment to be completed on short notice in the near future.

"Two: Send Raimenu and a workaday specialist to Egypt. I want Raimenu to find a woman who wishes to bear a child for a fee of $100,000. Not just any woman. A woman of a family that still worships The Old Way. The specialist is for a mitochondrial check—make sure she's from an African First Mother.

"Three: The first two conditions being met, arrange for a scientific examination of the Deir el Bahrani remains at the Cairo Museum. During this, one of the party is to obtain genetic material from the remains of the "unknown boy," who we know to be the Son of He-We-Await" (Tuthmoses and Faidul bowed their heads).

"Four: The genetic material from Sekhemetmui is to be implanted by the splicer into the egg of the mitochondrial First Mother.

"Five: The child of this operation is to be handed over to the Society and placed in my care to be raised as I see fit.

"End of note."

"So it is written," said Faidul.

"So it shall be done," said Doctor Tuthmoses.

They called him Bobby. He was raised at first by a succession of nurses in an upstairs room which became his world. He was eventually given everything he wanted—toys, games, insects, fish, mammals.

He had large dark eyes, a small head with a high hairline, a short face, an aquiline nose. One of his arms was bent from birth.

What he read and what he saw were censored by Tuthmoses and his staff—everything was tape-delayed and edited. Other children were brought in for him to play with. He was given tutors and teachers.

He grew up self-centered, untroubled, fairly well-adjusted, with a coolness toward the doctor that seemed to be reciprocated.

They were playing one day; Bobby, the teacher-lady and the kids who were brought in after their school let out.

They had been doing some kind of word games, and Deborah the dark-haired girl got up to get something, then had gone over and started talking to Sally Conroe about something. There had been some quiet talk, and then Deborah did a little dance, humming in a whiny voice:

"Yah-ya-ya-ya-yah yoo yah yoo-yah" and then had sung:

"All the girls in France

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Do the hoochie-hoochie dance
And the dance—"

The teacher-lady, at that time a Ms. Allen, stopped her with a sharp command.

Bobby found himself staring at Deborah, whom he did not particularly like.

Then Ms. Allen got them all doing something else, and soon Bobby forgot about it.

Deborah never came back to the after-school group after that day. Bobby didn't particularly care.

One evening he was going through some books—the ones he had with the big black places on some of the pages—and he was looking in the one on music, way over toward the back.

He turned the page. There was a bright gaudy photograph of a music machine.

He read the caption: In the 1940s and 1950s, "jukeboxes" (like the 1953 Wurlitzer 150 pictured here) brought music to the customers of malt shops, cafes and taverns.

The machine had disc recordings inside and a turntable he could see. But it was wide and curved, like a box that ended in a smooth round top. It was bright with neon lights, and the sides had what looked like bubbles of colored water inside.

Bobby stared at the picture and stared at it, as if there were something else there.

He held up his hand slowly toward the photo, moving his fingers closer, staring at the page. His hand curved to grip the picture.

"What do you have there?" asked Dr. Tuthmoses, who had come in to check on him.

"A jukebox," he said, still looking.

Tuthmoses peered over his shoulder a moment.

"Yes. They used to be very popular."

Bobby's hand was still held over the page.

"What's wrong?" asked the doctor.

"It's—like—"

"Well, now everybody has music at home. They don't have to go where jukeboxes used to be. They're anachronisms."

"What are anar- ancho—?"

"Anachronisms. Something that doesn't belong to its time. Something that has outlived its usefulness. One or the other."

"Oh," said Bobby. He put down the book.

Sometimes, late at night, Bobby thought of the word "anachronism."

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It conjured up for him a vision of a bright orange, yellow, and green jukebox.

The doctor came to Bobby's room one day when he was eleven.

"I've got some tapes we should watch together, Bobby," he said. "You've never seen anything like them. They're about a faraway country, one you've never seen or heard of."

"I don't want to watch the tube," said Bobby. "I'm reading a neat book about American Indians."

"That will have to wait. You should see these."

"I don't want to," said Bobby.

"This is one of the few times you're not going to get your way," said the doctor. He was old and growing irritable. "It's time you saw these."

Then he gave Bobby a mug of hot chocolate.

"I don't want this, either."

"Drink it. I've got mine here. Watch." The old man gulped the thick hot liquid, leaving himself a dark brown mustache.

"Oh, all right," said Bobby, and did likewise.

Then they sat down in front of the television and the doctor put the tape on. It started with flute music. Then there was a cartoon, a black and white Walt Disney, with sounds and a spider inside a bunch of pointed buildings with carvings on the walls.

Bobby watched, not understanding. He found himself yawning. The carvings on the walls, angular people, came alive; strange things were happening on the screen.

Strange things happened inside him, too. He felt lightheaded, like when he had a fever. His stomach was very numb, like the place had been when Dr. Khaffiri the dentist had fixed his tooth last year. He felt listless, like when he was tired and sleepy, only he wasn't. He was wide awake and thinking about all kinds of things.

The black and white cartoon ended and another started—a Gandy Goose and Sourpuss one. They were in army uniforms, in the same place with the skinny curved trees and the pointed big buildings, and Gandy went to sleep and was inside one of them, and stranger things began to happen than even in the first cartoon. Walls moved, boxes opened and things came out, all wrapped—

Things *came out all wrapped.*

There had been a movie after the cartoon and it was ending.

Things came out all *wrapped.*

It had been about the same things, he thought, but it had been like in a dream, like Gandy had, because Bobby wasn't paying attention—he was watching another movie on his half-closed eyelids.

It was like at the hospital only—

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Things came out all wrapped.

Only—

Bobby turned toward the Doctor who sat very still, watching him, waiting for something.

Bobby's head was tired but he could not stop, not now.

"I . . . I . . ."

"Yes?"

"I want to go there."

"I know. We're ready to leave."

"I really want to go there."

"We'll be on the way before you know it."

"I . . ."

"Rest now. Sleep."

He did. When he woke up he was in an airplane, miles and miles up, and the air above them and the water below was blue and deep as a Vick's Salve jar, or so it seemed, and he went back to sleep, his head resting on Dr. Tuthmoses' shoulder.

The launch made its way down the brown flood of the Nile. The sun was bright but the air was moderate above the river. There was no feeling of wind, only coolness.

Bobby sat in a chair, watching the river, taking no notice of the other boats they passed, the fellucahs they met. His hands fidgeted on the arms of the deck chair. He would turn from time to time to watch Dr. Tuthmoses. The doctor said nothing; he saw that the wild faraway shine was still in the boy's eyes.

Bobby sat forward. Then he stood. Then he slowly sat back down and slumped in the chair. Tuthmoses, who had his hand up, let it fall again. The launch pilot went back to his fixed stare, whistling a tune to himself.

Another half hour passed in the muddy cool silence.

Bobby shot up so fast Tuthmoses was taken aback.

"Here!" Bobby said, "Put in here!"

Tuthmoses held his hand up, pointed. The pilot turned the wheel and the nose of the craft aimed itself at a large rock outcropping. The old doctor sighed; he had been on an expedition thirty years before which covered this very part of the River and had found nothing. The boat aimed at the western bank, the land of the setting sun and of the dead.

"No, no," said Bobby, jumping up and down, "Not that way. Over there! That way!"

He was pointing toward the eastern bank, the land of day. And of the living.

* * *

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THE HOUSE OF THE *KA*: II

The Light! The light! What place is this?

—is this the room where my soul is weighed? Thoth? My brother-gods?

Heavy. My limbs are heavy. My brain is a lump. Why cannot I think? My dreams are troubled. They are swirling colors.

My son. How he hates the traditions. The things that are done in the name of being god. He shall have to marry his half-niece, many years older than he. I should have had a daughter for him to marry, by his mother also. All his older half-brothers died before him. But his birth killed her.

It is too late to sire a queen. I am old. He was so twisted in his limbs. What pain is that in my knee?

I know you trick me! All of you! These are my last thoughts. You have left me to die; my *ka* to wither away. How did I listen to priests?

What great plan, Sekhmet? To put an old man out of the way?

Where are my eyes? Have they put me in the jars? How do I think? I am going mad mad mad mad mad

My foot itches.

It took two years and the best people and equipment money could buy and a few times they almost weren't enough.

Bobby was still cared for, but left on his own more and more. He found himself sitting for days, wondering what was happening, what had happened, where he had come in, what his purpose was. He knew he was part of some plan, something to do with the trip he barely remembered.

Dark places in the books disappeared, he could have anything he wanted. Books on Egypt were brought to him when he asked. The television now jibed with the *TV Guide*. He watched the news—depressing stuff on wars, plagues, fires, human misery, suffering, death, live and in color.

Sometimes he thought the old way, the days before the trip were better.

Nothing told him *anything* he really wanted to know.

Dr. Tuthmoses, old and subject to palsy, came to him for the first time in months.

"Tomorrow, Bobby," he said. "Tomorrow we will take you up there with us. There will be a ritual. You will need to be there. We will bring you clothes for it. You get to carry things needed in the ceremony. You're an important part of it. I hope you'll like that."

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"I'm going to get to see him?"

Tuthmoses' eyes widened.

"Yes."

"Doctor?"

"Yes?"

"That time, before we went on the trip. When you showed me the cartoons and the movie. You also put something in my chocolate, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did, Bobby. It was to help you remember."

"Would you give it to me again?"

"Why?"

"If I'm going to be part of this, I want it to *mean* something. I want to understand."

"Don't you have everything you want?"

"I don't have a place," said Bobby. "I don't understand any of this. I've read the books. They're just words, words about people a long time ago. They were interesting, but they've been gone a long time. What do they have to do with *me*?"

Tuthmoses studied him for a few seconds. "Perhaps it's for the best." He got up shakily and walked to the bookcase jammed with titles by Wallis Budge, Rawlinson, Atkinson, Carter. He picked one up, turned pages. "I'll have the drink brought to you tonight. After you finish it, read this chapter." He held the book out to Bobby, held open with his long thumb to a chapter on ritual. "Then you'll understand."

"I want to," said Bobby.

Tuthmoses opened the door. He turned back. "In a year or so you might be able to leave here, go anywhere, do anything you wish. By then it won't matter what you know or whom you tell. But until then, you have to stay."

"I guess I don't understand."

Tuthmoses' shoulders dropped. "I wish I had been a better guardian, a father to you," said the doctor. "It was not to be. Perhaps, later on if I live, and events do not deter, He-willing, we can learn to be friends. I would like to try."

Bobby stared at him.

"Well, that's the way I feel," said the doctor. "Rest now. Tomorrow is the greatest day."

"Of *my* life?"

"Of all lives," said Tuthmoses. He left.

He was brought into the great long room with the large curtain at the end.

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Doctor Tuthmoses, Faidul, and the others were dressed in loose grey robes. Their heads and beards were fresh-shaved.

On the walls were murals, hieroglyphs, evocations to the gods. At one end of the room stood the hippo-headed statue of the god Sekhmet, its thick arms raised in benediction. In front of it was a throne of ivory, facing the curtain.

The room was brightly lit though it was early in the morning. When the door opened and Bobby was ushered in, his dark eyes were blinking. He was dressed in a short kilt, he had bare arms, chest and legs. A white headdress spilled down onto his shoulders.

In his crossed arms were a hook and a flail.

Tuthmoses had told him what the ceremony was; the book and drink the night before told him what it meant.

In the early days, once a year, the chief priest would chase the Pharaoh with a flail around a courseway. As long as the Pharaoh could run, his youth and vigor were renewed by the ceremony.

In later years when the kingdoms were united this was changed. A young man was chosen to run the course before the priest, and his vigor would transfer by magic to the ruler. This was the ceremony of *heb-sed.*

Bobby was the chosen runner.

The course was outlined by bare-chested men, standing four feet in from the walls of the room, holding in their hands bundles of wheat.

Before the throne on a low table were symbols of life and death—four empty canopic jars, their effigy-tops unstoppered, an empty set of scales, an obsidian embalmer's knife, the figure of a baboon.

Another door opened and all in the room, except Bobby and the men holding the wheat along the course, dropped to the ground.

There was the sound of small steps, shuffling feet. Bobby watched the four men bring the shrunken figure in between them.

He was old, old and bent. They had dressed him in another simple kilt. His skin was pitted and wrinkled, stained in patches of light and dark from chemicals.

He doddered forward, eyes looking neither right nor left. His head had been shaven; there were corrugations in his skull like a greenhouse roof. His legs were twisted. One arm was immobile.

They placed him on the throne, then the attendants fell to their faces.

Dr. Tuthmoses stepped forward, bowed.

On the old man's head he placed first the red crown of the Bee Kingdom, then the white crown of the Reed Kingdom. The old man's eyes focused for the first time at the touch of the crown's cloth.

He looked slowly around him.

"*Heb-sed*?" he croaked.

"Yes, *heb-sed*," answered Tuthmoses.

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The ancient man leaned back in the throne a little; the edge of his mouth fluttered as if he were trying to smile.

Tuthmoses waved—a priest stepped forward, came to Bobby, took the flail from the hand of his bad arm. Music began to play through hidden speakers, music like in the first of Bobby's dreams while watching the cartoons two years before.

Bobby stepped past the men with the wheat and began to run. The priest's naked feet slapped on the Armstrong tile floor behind him, and the first of the knots on the flail hit him, drawing blood from his shoulder.

He jerked. Faster and faster he ran, brushing by the standing men, and at every third step the flail kissed him with its hot tongue and he yelled.

Some of the wheat covered the floor by the second circuit. On the third Bobby saw spots of blood on the tiles ahead.

They passed the starting point—Bobby kept running. The expected stroke did not come. He looked back over his shoulder. The priest had stopped at the marker, arm still raised. He motioned the boy back and handed him the flail.

Bobby's shoulders twitched as the priest guided him next to Tuthmoses. He was sweating and his chest heaved.

Bobby looked at the old man on the throne—was it only the nearness or did he look less ancient, more human? The music rose in volume, drums, flutes, strings. The old man's eyes grew bright.

"Oh Great House!" said Tuthmoses in the Old Language, "We wait to do your bidding. Behold," he said, waving his arm, "the sunrise 5000 years later!"

The room lights went out.

The curtain pulled back. Dawn flooded the room twenty-two stories up over Central Park. Great towers rose up on all sides, their windows filled with lights. The ocean was a flat smoky line beyond, and the slim cuticle of the sun's red edge stood up.

The old man stared in wonder.

"I have lived to see it," he said. Then he looked at Bobby. His lip trembled.

"Boy," he said. "Here," he lifted his twisted blotched arms toward him. "My flail, my scepter."

Tuthmoses motioned him forward, indicating that Bobby hand them over.

Bobby stepped up on the dais, watching the shaking in the old man's hands as they closed on the sacred objects, pulling them to his breast.

Bobby stepped backwards, picked up the obsidian knife from the table and jammed it under the ribs of the old man and twisted it.

He made no sound but slid up and over his own knees and spilled

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forward off the throne onto the floor, the scepter breaking on the chair's arm.

"You were the worst father anyone *ever* had!" yelled Bobby.

There was a gasp of breath all around the room, then the sound of someone working the slide on an automatic pistol. The doctors made a rush toward the bloody old man.

"Stop!" said Bobby, turning toward them, knife in his hand.

They froze. Faidul was aiming a pistol at Bobby's head. Tuthmoses stared at him, eyes wide, breath coming shallowly.

"He has seen the sun rise 5000 years from his time," said Bobby. He dropped the Ethiopian knife back onto the table, knocking over the baboon figurine. "*Now*, his line is ready to reign until the last day of mankind."

He walked to the throne, the barrel of Faidul's pistol following him.

"Only this time," said Bobby, "I'll do it *right*."

He sat down.

Beginning with Tuthmoses, and one by one, they bowed down before him, prostrating themselves to the floor tiles. Last to go was Faidul, whose hand began to tremble when Bobby gave him a withering stare.

"What is your first wish, Oh Great House?" asked Tuthmoses from the floor.

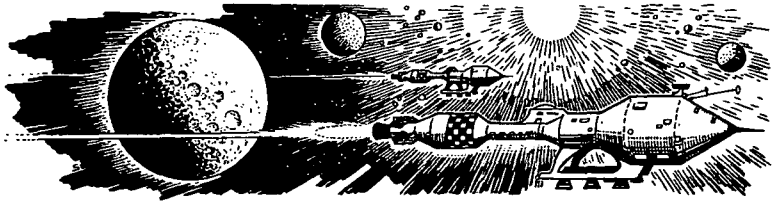
"See that my late father is given seventy days' mourning, that his tomb is made ready, that his *ka* be provided for through all eternity."

"Yes, He-We-Await," said Tuthmoses, beginning to tear at his robe and gnash his teeth.

Bobby watched the orb of the sun widen and stand up from the horizon, grow brighter, too bright to stare at.

"Get busy!" he said, turning his head away.

So began the last days of mankind. ●



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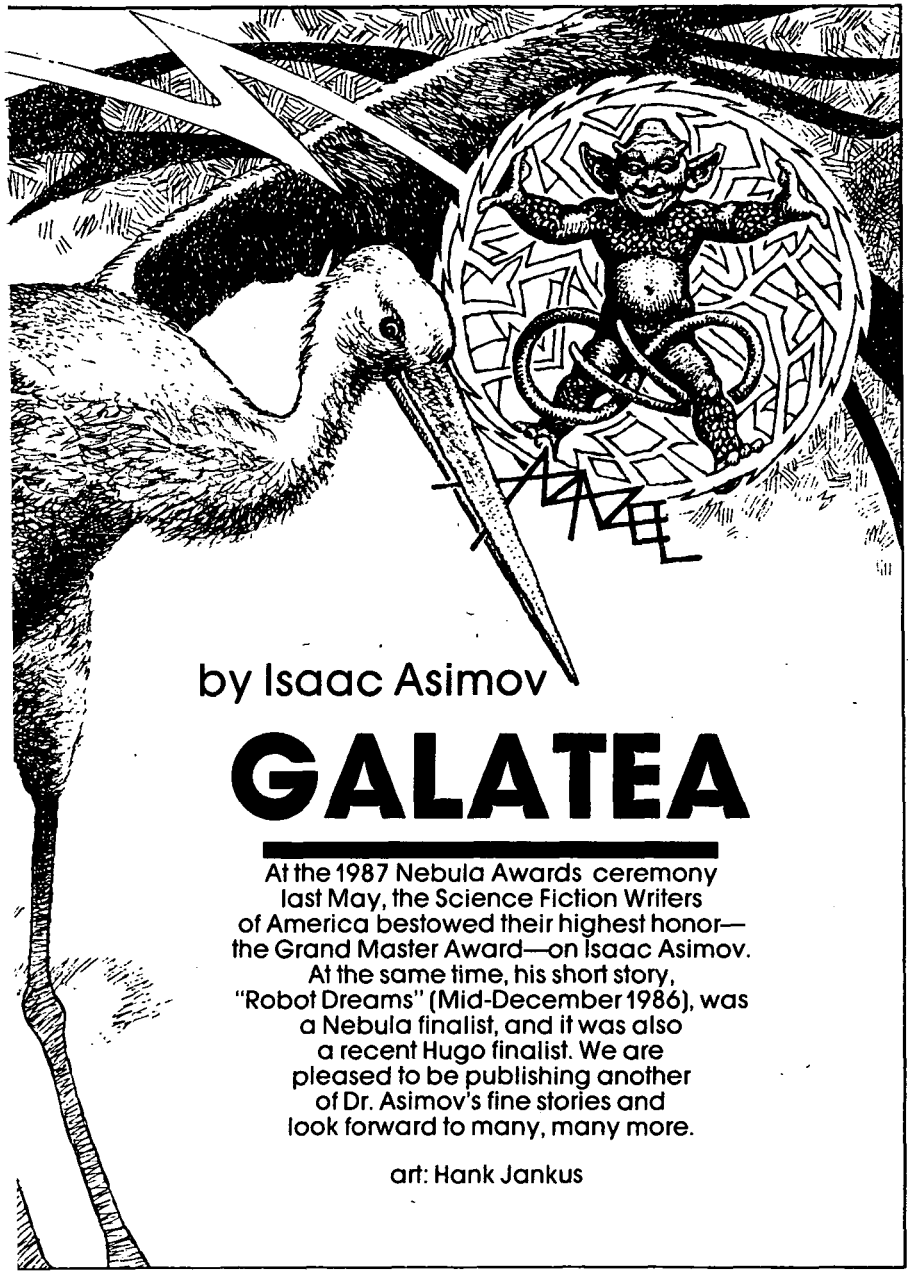

by Isaac Asimov

GALATEA

At the 1987 Nebula Awards ceremony last May, the Science Fiction Writers of America bestowed their highest honor—the Grand Master Award—on Isaac Asimov. At the same time, his short story, "Robot Dreams" (Mid-December 1986), was a Nebula finalist, and it was also a recent Hugo finalist. We are pleased to be publishing another of Dr. Asimov's fine stories and look forward to many, many more.

art: Hank Jankus

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For some reason unknown, especially to myself, I occasionally use George as the repository for my innermost feelings. Since he has an enormous and overflowing fund of sympathy, all of which is reserved for himself, this is useless, but I do it anyway, now and then.

Of course my own fund of self-pity was overflowing at the moment so perhaps I couldn't help myself.

We were waiting for our strawberry-shortcake dessert after a substantial lunch at the Peacock Alley, and I said, "I am sick and tired, George, of having critics make no effort to find out what it is I am trying to do. I am not interested in what *they,* would do if they were I. After all, they can't write, or they wouldn't waste their time being critics. And if they *can* write, after a fashion, the only function their criticisms offer them is a chance to chip away at their superiors. What's more—"

But the strawberry shortcake arrived and George seized the opportunity to take over the conversation, something that he would have done at about that point even if the dessert had not arrived.

"Old boy," he said, "you must learn to take the vicissitudes of life calmly. Tell yourself that your miserable writings have so little effect on the world that what reviewers may say, if they bother to say anything at all, is totally without consequence. Thoughts of this kind will greatly relieve you and prevent your developing an ulcer. You might particularly avoid such maudlin speech in *my* presence, as you would if you had the sensitivity to realize that my work is far more important than yours and the reviews I receive are, on occasion, far more devastating."

"Are you going to tell me you write, too?" I said, sardonically, digging into the cake.

"No," said George, digging into his. "I am that far more important individual, a benefactor of humanity—a berated, unappreciated benefactor of humanity."

I could swear that a suspicion of a tear slightly dampened his eyes. "I don't see," I said, kindly, "how anyone's opinion of you can possibly sink so low as to be considered an underappreciation."

"I ignore the sneer," said George, "since it originates with you, and will tell you that I am thinking of that beautiful woman, Elderberry Muggs."

"Elderberry?" I said, with a touch of incredulity.

Elderberry was her name [said George]. I do not know why her parents should have named her so, though it might well have commemorated a tender moment in their pre-nuptial relationship. It was Elderberry's own suggestion that both her parents were a bit tiddly with elderberry wine during the activities that gave her her start in life. She might not have had the chance for such a start, otherwise.

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In any case, her father, who was an old friend of mine, asked me to be godfather at her christening and I could not refuse him. A great many friends of mine, impressed by my noble appearance and by my open and ingenuously virtuous countenance, can only feel at ease in church with me next to them, so that I have had a great many godfatherships to my credit. Naturally, I take these things seriously and feel the responsibility of the post keenly. I therefore remain as close to my godchildren as possible in later life, all the more so when they grow up to be as supernally beautiful as Elderberry.

Her father died at just about the time Elderberry turned twenty and she inherited, as it happened, a substantial sum of money which, naturally, increased her beauty in the eyes of the world generally. I am, myself, above making a great to-do over mere trash such as money, but I did feel it necessary to guard her from fortune hunters. For that I made it my business to cultivate her society to an even greater extent, and frequently dined at her home. After all, she was very fond of her Uncle George, as you can well imagine, and I, for one, certainly can't blame her for that.

As it further happened, Elderberry did not quite need the nest egg her father had left her, for she turned out to be a sculptor of renown, producing works whose artistic value could not be questioned since they commanded high prices at the marketplace.

I myself did not quite understand her output, for my taste in art is quite ethereal, and I cannot expect to appreciate the things she created for the delectation of that portion of the crass multitude who could afford her prices. I remember, on one occasion, asking her what a particular piece of sculpture represented.

"As you see," she said, "the work is labeled 'Stork in Flight.' "

I studied the object, which was cast in the finest bronze, and said, "Yes, I noticed the label, but where is the stork?"

"Here," she said, pointing to a small cone of metal that arose from a rather amorphous bronze base and came to a sharp point.

I regarded it thoughtfully, then said, "Is that a stork?"

"Certainly it is, you old clotpoll," she said (for she always addressed me in affectionate terms), "it represents the tip of the stork's long bill."

"Is that enough, Elderberry?"

"Absolutely," said Elderberry. "It is not the stork itself I am attempting to represent, but the abstract notion of storkness which is exactly what this brings to mind."

"Yes, it does," I said, slightly bemused, "now that you mention it. Still, the label says that the stork is in flight. How does that come about?"

"Why, you ninny-puss," she exclaimed. "Don't you see this rather amorphous bronze base?"

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"Yes," I said, "it rather forces itself on my attention."

"And you won't deny that the air, or any gas, if it comes to that, is an amorphous mass. Well, then this rather amorphous bronze base is a crystal-clear representation of the atmosphere in the abstract. And you see that on this face of the base there is a thin straight line, absolutely horizontal."

"Yes. How clear it is once you point it out."

"That is the abstract notion of flight through the atmosphere."

"Remarkable," I said. "luminously clear once it is explained.—How much will you get for it?"

"Oh," she said, waving one hand negligently, as though to emphasize the nothingness of it all. "Ten thousand dollars, perhaps. It is so simple and self-evident a thing I would feel guilty charging more. It is more a *morceau* than anything else. Not like that," and she waved toward a mural on the wall constructed of gunnysacks and pieces of cardboard, with the whole centered about a broken eggbeater that seemed to have something that looked like dried egg upon its lower reaches.

I looked at it respectfully. "Priceless, of course!" I said.

"I should think so," she said. "That's not a new eggbeater, you know. It has the patina of age. I got it out of someone's rubbish bag."

And then, for some reason I could not fathom, her lower lip began to tremble and she quavered, "Oh, Uncle George."

I was instantly alarmed. I seized her capable left hand, with its strong, sculptor's fingers, and squeezed it. "What is it, my child?"

"Oh," she said, "I get so tired working out these simple abstractions just because they represent the public's taste." She put the knuckles of her right hand to her forehead and said tragically, "How I wish I could do what I *want* to do; what my artist's heart tells me I must do."

"What is that, Elderberry?"

"I want to experiment. I want to move off in new directions. I want to try the untried, dare the undared, produce the unproduceable."

"Then why don't you do that, my child. Surely, you are rich enough to indulge yourself."

And she suddenly smiled and her whole face beamed with loveliness. "Thank you, Uncle George," she said, "thank you for saying that. Actually, I *do* indulge myself—now and then. I have a secret room in which I place my little experiments, those which only the educated artistic palate can possibly appreciate. Those which are caviar to the general," she added, coining a phrase.

"May I see them?"

"Of course, *dear* uncle. After what you have said in encouragement of my aspirations, how could I deny you?"

She lifted a thick curtain under which one found a secret door that

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was scarcely visible, so closely did it fit into the wall. She pushed a button and it opened electrically. We passed in and, as the door closed behind us, brilliant fluorescents lighted the windowless room we had entered and made it as bright as day.

Almost at once, I saw before me the representation of a stork, made of a rich stony material. Every feather was in place, the eyes were bright with life, the bill a little open, the wings half outspread. To my eyes it seemed ready to launch itself into the air.

"Good heavens, Elderberry," I said. "I have never seen anything like this."

"Do you like it? I call it 'photographic art,' and I think it is beautiful in its way. Thoroughly experimental, of course, and critics and public alike would laugh and sneer and fail to see what I am trying to do. They honor only simple abstractions which exist entirely on the surface and which anyone can understand, nothing like this which can appeal only to the subtle and to those who are content to allow comprehension to dawn slowly."

After that, I was privileged to enter her secret room now and then, and to study the occasional bit of exotica that formed under her strong fingers and educated chisel. My admiration at a woman's head that looked exactly like Elderberry's own was profound.

"I call it 'The Mirror,' " she said, dimpling shyly. "It pictures my soul, don't you think?"

I agreed enthusiastically.

It was that, I think, which finally induced her to allow me to see the innermost secret of all.

I had said to her, "Elderberry, how is it that you do not have any" I paused and then, scorning euphemisms, completed the sentence with "any boyfriends."

"Boyfriends," she said, with a look of deep scorn, "Pah! They flock around, these would-be boyfriends you speak of, but how can I look at them? I am an artist. I have in my heart and mind and soul a picture of true manly beauty that no mere flesh and blood can duplicate, and that, and that alone, can win my heart. That, and that alone, *has* won my heart."

"*Has* won your heart, my child?" I said, softly. "Then you have met him?"

"I have—but come, Uncle George, you shall see him. You and I shall share my great secret."

We returned to the room of photographic art, and there another thick curtain was pulled aside, so that we stood before an alcove I had never before seen. There, in the alcove, was the statue of a man, six feet tall

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and nude, which was, as far as I could see, anatomically correct to the last millimeter.

Elderberry pushed a button and the statue slowly turned on its pedestal, its smooth symmetry and perfect proportions evident from every angle.

"My masterpiece," breathed Elderberry.

I am not myself a great admirer of manly beauty, but reflected in Elderberry's lovely face I saw a panting admiration that made it clear she was suffused with love and adoration.

"You love that statue," I said, cautiously avoiding the impersonal "it."

"Oh, yes," she whispered. "I would die for him. While he exists, I find all other men deformed and hateful. I could never let any man touch me without a sensation of disgust. I want only him. Only him."

"My poor child," I said, "The statue is not alive."

"I know. I know," she said brokenly. "My poor heart is shattered over that. What shall I do?"

I murmured, "How sad! It reminds me of the tale of Pygmalion."

"Of whom?" said Elderberry, who like all artists, was a simple soul, who knew nothing of the wide outer world.

"Of Pygmalion. It is a story of ancient times. Pygmalion was a sculptor just like you except, of course, that he was a man. And he carved a lovely statue as you did, except that, because of his peculiar manly prejudices, he carved a woman, whom he called Galatea. The statue was so beautiful that Pygmalion fell in love with it. You see, it is just like your case, except that you are a living Galatea and the statue is a graven—"

"No," said Elderberry energetically, "don't expect me to call him Pygmalion. That is a rough, crude name and I want something poetic. I call him," and her face lit up with love again, "Hank. There is something about the name of Hank, so soft, so musical, that speaks to my very soul. —But what happened to Pygmalion and Galatea?"

I said, "Overcome by love, Pygmalion prayed to Aphrodite—"

"To whom?"

"Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. He prayed to her and she, out of sympathy, gave life to the statue. Galatea became a living woman, married Pygmalion, and they lived happily ever after."

"Hmm," said Elderberry, "I suppose that Aphrodite doesn't really exist, does she?"

"No, not really. On the other hand—" But I went no further. I didn't think that Elderberry would be able to understand me if I spoke of my two-centimeter demon, Azazel.

"Too bad," she said, "because if anyone could bring Hank to life for me; if anyone could change him from cold, hard marble to warm, soft flesh, I would give him— Oh, Uncle George, can't you imagine embracing

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Hank and feeling the warm softness of his flesh under your hands—softness—softness—" She kept murmuring the word in an ecstasy of sensual delight.

I said, "Actually, dear Elderberry, I don't wish to imagine doing it myself, but I can see that you would find it delectable. But you were saying that if anyone could change him from cold, hard marble to soft, warm flesh, you would give him something. Did you actually have some specific something in mind, dear?"

"Why, yes! I would give him a million dollars."

I paused, as anyone would, out of simple respect for the sum and then I said, "Do you *have* a million dollars, Elderberry?"

"I have two million lovely bucks, Uncle George," she said, in her simple and unspoiled way, "and passing out half of them would be fine for me. Hank would be worth it, especially since I could always make more by grinding out a few more abstractions for the public."

"So you can," I muttered. "Well, you just keep your chin up, Elderberry, and we'll see what your Uncle George can do for you."

It was clearly a case for Azazel, so I called up my little extraterrestrial, who happened to look like a little two-centimeter version of a devil, complete with little nubbins of horns and a twitching spiked tail.

He was, as usual, in a bad humor and he insisted on wasting my time by telling me in rather boring detail just why he was in a bad humor. It appeared he had done something of an artistic nature—artistic, at least, by the standards of his own ridiculous world, for though he described it in detail, I couldn't understand it—and it had been frowned on by the critics. Critics are the same the Universe over, I should suppose, worthless and vicious, one and all.

At that, though, I think you should be grateful that critics on Earth have *some* minimum dregs of decency about them. If Azazel may be trusted, what the critics said about him was far beyond anything anyone has said about you. The mildest adjective would call for the horsewhip. It was the similarity of your complaint to his that helped bring this episode to my mind.

It was with difficulty that I managed to stem his vituperation long enough to interject a request that he bring a statue to life.

He squawked with a shrillness that hurt my ears. "Bring silicate-based material to carbon-and-water life? Why don't you ask me to build you a planet out of excrement and be done with it? How can I turn stone to flesh?"

"Surely you can think of a way, oh Mighty One," I said. "Consider, that if you achieve this enormous task, you can report it to your world, and then wouldn't the critics feel like a bunch of silly asses?"

"They are far worse than a bunch of silly asses," said Azazel. "If they

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felt like silly asses that would exceed their worth by a great deal. Such a feeling would *reward* them. I want them to feel like a pack of *farfelanimors*."

"That is exactly what they will feel like. All you have to do is to turn cold into warm, stone into flesh, hard into soft. Especially soft. A young woman I think highly of wants to embrace the statue and feel soft, elastic flesh under her fingertips. It shouldn't be too hard. The statue is a perfect representation of a human being and you just fill it with muscles, blood vessels, organs, and nerves and cover it with skin, and you'll have it."

"Just fill it with all that, eh? Nothing more, eh?"

"But think, you will make the critics feel like *farfelanimors*."

"Hmm. There's that. —Do you know what a *farfelanimor* smells like?"

"I don't, but don't tell me. And you can use me as a model."

"Model, shmodel," he said, peevishly (where he picks up his expressions, I don't know). "Do you know how complicated even the most rudimentary human brain is?"

"Well," I said, "You don't have to go very far with the brain. Elderberry is a simple girl and what she wants of the statue does not very deeply involve the brain, I imagine."

"You'll have to show me the statue and let me consider the case," he said.

"I will. But remember. Arrange for the statue to come to life while we are watching, and make sure that it is terribly in love with Elderberry."

"Love is easy. That's just a matter of adjusting hormones."

The next day, I managed to get Elderberry to invite me to view the statue again. Azazel was in my shirt pocket, peeping out and emitting feeble high-pitched snorts. Fortunately, Elderberry had eyes only for her statue and would not have noticed if twenty full-sized demons had stepped up next to her.

"Well?" I said later to Azazel.

"I'll try to do it," he said. "I'll fill him with organs based on you. You are a normal representative of your foul and inferior species, I trust."

"More than normal," I said, haughtily. "I am an outstanding specimen."

"Very well, then. She shall have her statue entirely encased in soft, warm, palpitating flesh. She will have to wait till noon tomorrow, your time. I can't hurry this."

"I understand. She and I will be waiting."

The next morning I phoned Elderberry. "Elderberry, my child, I have spoken to Aphrodite."

Elderberry said in an excited whisper, "Do you mean she *does* exist, Uncle George?"

"In a manner of speaking, dear child. Your ideal man will come to life at noon today under our very eyes."

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"Oh, my," she said, faintly. "You are not deceiving me, are you, uncle?"

"I never deceive," I said, and I never do, but I will admit I was a little nervous, for I depended entirely on Azazel. —But then, he had never failed me.

At noon we were both at the alcove once more, looking at the statue which stared stonily into space. I said to Elderberry, "Is your watch showing the correct time, dear?"

"Oh, yes. I checked it with the Observatory. We have one minute to go."

"The change may possibly be a minute or two late, of course. It's hard to judge these things exactly."

"Surely, a goddess ought to be on time," said Elderberry. "Otherwise, what's the good of being a goddess?"

I call that true faith, and she was justified, for on the second of noon, a tremor seemed to course through the statue. Slowly, his color changed from a dead marble-white to a warm flesh-pink. Slowly, motion animated his frame, his arms lowered to his side, his eyes gained a blue and glistening life, the hair on his head darkened to a light brown and appeared wherever appropriate elsewhere on his body. His head bent and he looked at Elderberry, who was hyperventilating madly.

Slowly, creakily, he stepped down from the pedestal, and walked toward Elderberry, arms outstretched.

"You Elderberry. Me Hank," he said.

"Oh, Hank," said Elderberry, as she melted into his arms.

For a long time, they stood frozen in the embrace and then she looked over her shoulder at me, her eyes shining with ecstasy, and said, "Hank and I will remain in the house for a few days as a sort of honeymoon, and then, Uncle George, I will see you," and she twiddled her fingers as though she were counting money.

At that, my eyes shone in ecstasy, too, and I tiptoed out of the house. Frankly, I thought it rather incongruous for a fully dressed young woman to be so warmly embraced by a naked young man, but I was sure that almost immediately upon my leaving, Elderberry would manage to correct the incongruity.

I waited ten days for Elderberry to phone me, but she never did. I was not entirely surprised, for I imagined she was otherwise occupied. Still, after ten days, I did think there would be a pause for breath, and I further began to think it only fair that since her ecstasy had been fulfilled, entirely through my efforts—and Azazel's—it was only fair that my ecstasy be fulfilled, too.

I went to her place of abode, where I had left the happy couple, and rang the bell. It was quite a while before there was an answer, and I was

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having an unpleasant picture of two young people having ecstasied each other to death, when finally the door opened a crack.

It was Elderberry, looking perfectly normal, if you count an angry look as perfectly normal. She said, "Oh, it's *you*."

"Why, yes," I said. "I was afraid you had left town to continue and extend your honeymoon." I didn't say anything about honeymooning themselves to death. I felt it would not be diplomatic.

She said, "And what do you want?"

It was not terribly friendly. I could understand that she might not like to be interrupted at her activities, but after ten days, surely a small interruption was not the end of the world.

I said, "There's a little matter of a million dollars, my child." I pushed the door open and walked in.

She looked at me with a cold sneer and said, "What you get is *bubkes*, fella."

I don't know what *"bubkes"* are, but I instantly deduced it was a good deal less than a million dollars.

I said, puzzled and more than a little hurt, "Why? What's wrong?"

"What's wrong?" she said, "What's wrong? I'll tell you what's wrong. When I said I wanted Hank soft, I didn't mean soft all over, permanently."

With her sculptor's strength, she pushed me out the door and slammed it shut. Then, as I stood there, nonplussed, she opened it again, "And if you ever come back, I'll have Hank tear you to pieces. He's strong as a bull in every other way."

So I left. What could I do? And how do you like that for a critique of *my* artistic efforts? So don't come to me with your petty complaints.

George shook his head when he completed his story and looked so despondent that it really touched me.

I said, "George, I know you blame Azazel for this, but really, it's not the little guy's fault. You emphasized the bit about softness—"

"So did she," George said indignantly.

"Yes, but you told Azazel to use you as a model for designing the statue, and surely that would account for the inability—"

George lifted his hand in a stop-gesture and glared at me. "That," he said, "hurts me even more than the loss of the money I had earned. I'll have you know that, despite the fact that I'm some years beyond my prime—"

"Yes, yes, George, I apologize. Here, I believe I owe you ten dollars."

Well, ten dollars is ten dollars. To my relief, George took the bill, and smiled. ●

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Bertini started at a touch and turned around to see Bernard Copi watching him with an amused expression. For a moment, he was surprised at Bernard's slightness as if he'd just seen him for the first time. Small people made Bertini feel big and broad and clumsy next to them. They stood in front of Bernard's booth: one more in a long line of exhibition booths running the length of the fairgrounds. The sky was greenish-blue and the sun was double in the sky: one sun bright yellow and large, the other dingy red and small.

"Is she pretty?" Bernard pressed. "Do you like her?"

"She's too tall," said Bertini, embarrassed to be caught watching her. "I don't know her. I've never seen her before."

Bernard laughed. "Do I not know you, Engineer Bertini Ranft? Am I not an artist and therefore not blind? You've been watching her move toward us for a quarter of an hour. So I *know* she looks good to you." He leaned toward Bertini and muttered in a loud stage whisper. "Go get your uniform. It's worked wonders for the rest of the crew."

Bertini stared at him. "You mock me."

The small man shook his head. "I only tease you. It is just good to see you soften once in a while. To see you smile."

"I smile."

Bernard laughed. "Right. And this is none of my business." He turned and scowled at an imaginary figure. "You, Bernard, should not meddle."

Bertini smiled slowly. "You, Bernard, are a madman."

"True. And a hungry madman at that. Can you hold this bastion of artistic integrity for me while I get something to eat?"

"Of course."

Bernard looked at him shrewdly. "You won't cheat me? You won't take my pride's work and flee my vengeance?"

"Where would I go?"

Bernard shrugged. "There is that. The *Divers Arts* is the only ship on Afternoon. It belongs to you, I, and Praihm. And the other artists of course."

Bertini shook his head. "Wrong. It belongs to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston."

"Don't bother me with details." With that, he turned and made his way toward the fairgrounds restaurant. It was several minutes before Bertini realized Bernard had left him to be alone in case the woman came to Bernard's booth. "You bastard," he said gently. Bertini frowned in irritation. Bernard would take a table next to the window and watch until he was satisfied. It all fit in with his idea of what Bertini should be, a project he'd been working on since the *Divers Arts* had left earth a year and a half before.

Bernard was a sculptor and a toymaker. He sculpted living protoplasm

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and out of it made toy animals, but he did not just build teddy bears. His animals were real, based on animals extinct or endangered on earth, and as true to the spirit of the originals as toys could be. He had hippos that would bathe with children, eagles that would stoop at living game, giraffes that ran like the spirit of their inspiration. None were larger than a good-sized house cat and all were made to be held.

Bertini shook his head and looked back up the line of booths. The woman was standing barely four feet from him.

Her eyes were a pale blue, almost gray, and her eyebrows and eyelashes were so blond as to be almost invisible. He looked down, cursing himself. I am most likely six times her age, he thought. At this late date, I should have dispensed with nervousness for life. He found himself staring at her hands, big, calloused, and crisscrossed by a fine pattern of scars. *She works with her hands.*

He looked back up to her. "Can I help you?"

She watched him a moment more, then turned to the animals. "These are earth animals?" Her voice was low.

He shook his head. "No. We're not allowed to carry natural animals. These are replicas." He felt suddenly boring, drab, dry, and musty as old cloth.

"Replicas . . ." she murmured.

She leaned against the cage and watched the replicas. A white bear sat near her, licking his fur. "What is that?" she asked, pointing to it.

"A polar bear. An aquatic animal that lived in the ice fields of the earth's northern polar regions."

She looked at him. "You're so stiff."

He realized he had been standing at attention. Slowly, he relaxed. She'll be gone by the end of the day. You'll never see her again. The nervousness began to subside.

She turned back to the animals. "May I see that one?" She indicated the polar bear.

He nodded, reached in, and picked it up. She took it from him and held it. The bear relaxed in her arms, befuddled for a moment. "He is so warm," she said. The bear struggled until she began to stroke it along the neck with those rough hands. It leaned its head against her and closed its eyes.

"He likes you," observed Bertini.

She did not speak for a moment. "I like him. Is he for sale?" She did not look at him; her entire attention was centered on the bear.

"All of the animals are for sale." It made him feel lonely to watch her holding the bear.

"How much?"

It was one of those rare moments when he could see into someone else's

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life. She couldn't afford one of Bernard's pets. They were costly to build and even when Bernard cut the price to the bone, they were still expensive. These exhibitions to poorer worlds like Afternoon were financed by grant, not profit. But, she worked hard for her living, at something she loved, and it didn't return much money. Bertini realized he wanted her to have it.

He hadn't spent much money on this run. He would never see her again, anyway. *Why not?* he thought.

He named a price he was sure she could afford, but not too low as to seem ridiculous. She frowned and thought for a long moment and he was afraid he'd misjudged and made it too high. Finally, she took a wallet out from a fold in her dress and carefully counted out the money to him in large, colorful bills.

"Thank you," he said.

She smiled at him and he smiled slightly in return. "Where are you from?" she asked.

"A little world near Scorpio. Cameron."

"Very well, then." She held up the bear with one hand. "Cameron you shall be." Then she pulled Bertini to her with her other hand and kissed him on the lips. She smiled at him again and walked away across the fairgrounds.

He watched her a moment, then took her money and turned to the cash box. Shielding his movements from the restaurant where he knew Bernard was watching, he made up the difference in the bear's price. He replaced the cash box and stood, waiting for Bernard to return.

The suns of Afternoon made most of the planet much too hot for people. Humans had to live close to the poles. There were no strong seasons here and with the two suns it was always late afternoon or twilight. Hence, Afternoon's name. Under a sky of early evening blue, he made his way to the bar to wait for Bernard.

The bar was cool and dark. He gave his order and waited for his beer. Before it came, someone loomed over his table. The kitchen light shadowed him from behind and Bertini couldn't see who it was but he could guess.

"Stovelighter. You are not in uniform."

Captain Praihm smelled of stale liquor and fat. His breathing was hoarse.

"I am an engineer, Captain," Bertini looked up into the shadows of the captain's face. " 'Stovelighter' is slang. Slang, as you no doubt know, is unbecoming to an officer."

"I will call you what I like. I gave orders that uniforms were to be worn at all times."

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"You're in the merchant marines now. Not the navy." The bartender brought Bertini his beer.

"My orders were clear—"

"Your orders are confined to the ship. Unless, of course, you feel I am endangering the ship's welfare by not wearing a uniform." He could see Praihm's face now. It was as heavy as the rest of him, smooth and wet: a frame for two pig-set eyes. "If that's the case, please put it in writing so I can take it up with the guild advocate when we get back." He drank some of his beer.

Praihm did not move for a moment. Something in the way he stood made Bertini wary and he stood up. They looked at one another across the table.

"There was a waver in the engine baselines when we set down," Praihm said slowly. "Check it out."

"There was no waver—"

"Engineer! *I* say there *was*. This is a matter of ship's security. If you want to contest it, put it in writing and I'll take it up with the advocate when we get back." Praihm smiled at him.

Bertini did not speak a moment.

"Well?"

"I'll look at it next watch."

"I'm concerned about it *now,* Ranft. Anything could happen." His voice dropped to a low whisper. "Anything."

Bertini drained his glass. "Just so. You are right, of course." He started out the door.

"I'll inspect it tomorrow. Do you hear me?"

Bertini stopped in the doorway and looked back at Praihm. He did not speak and Praihm licked his lips.

"I hear you. It will be ready," he said finally and closed the door.

"He hates you. Even I can see that."

Bertini checked the phase diagnostics. "This is news?" He reset the output and read it again. It was, as he had known, perfect. "You are an artist and therefore not blind. I remember. You told me."

Bernard sat on the table next to the console. His legs dangled several inches from the floor. "He'll screw you to the wall over things like this. Why didn't you just wear your uniform?"

"Stubborness, I suppose. He really doesn't have the authority to order me to wear it."

"That's no answer."

Bertini sighed. "An engineer plugs into the ship and flies it like it was his body. Pilots take the ship through *n*-space and engineers fly us in

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real space when we get there. This is what I do. That's important, not what I wear."

"You wear a uniform on the ship."

"It's required by my guild. I don't have any control over that."

Bernard ran his fingers through his hair. "You've been on his shit list since you came on board."

Bertini adjusted the fusion field, checked the monitor and adjusted it again. "Praihm's a bastard. He likes to squeeze people until they hurt. When I was in the navy I heard about him from a pilot I knew. Praihm was captain on a satellite tender out of Luna. The Board of Ships caught him beating hell out of his engineer with a loading bar when he was drunk. They busted him right out." He grinned without humor. "Praihm's got friends, though. The whole thing was hushed up—'honorable retirement,' they called it." He sighed. "His friends got the Boston MFA to give him the *Divers Arts,* too."

"But why does he lean on *you?*"

"He doesn't like engineers."

"It's more than that. I'm not blind."

"No," chuckled Bertini, "you're an arist." He put both his hands palm down on the table and leaned against them. "Me and Ruth, the pilot, are guild professionals."

"The Stovelighter and the Lamplighter."

Bertini chuckled. "I'd almost like those names if they hadn't been played up so much. Anyway, the rest of the crew are officers. Praihm likes to have his crew scratch and bow whenever he walks by just like when he was in the Navy. Ruth and I don't do that kind of thing. He can't do without a pilot. But Navy captains like to think they can be engineers, so they think we're replaceable."

"Jesus." Bernard shook his head. "Why the hell did you sign up under him?"

"Didn't know Praihm was captain until after I'd signed the contract."

"You could have refused."

"I don't break contracts."

"But—"

Bertini looked at him tiredly. "Look, Bernard. Seventy years ago, I passed the certification exams. After that, the guild surgeons anesthetized me for a month to take my body apart and put it back together so I could fly a ship. Then, they did it again to harden me for protection against radiation and other nasty things. When the engines are running down here, nastiness abounds. It's *dangerous.* Engineers are too expensive to waste." He looked thoughtful for a moment. "Afterwards, you're different. Your skin feels too tight, things look too ragged and sharp. You hurt, all over. You have to learn to walk, talk, run, make love, all

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over again. After that, do you think some son of a bitch like Praihm could scare me off a contract? Do you think *anybody* could?" He stopped and shook his head. "I don't break contracts."

There was a long awkward silence until the ship's communicator chimed. "Is Mister Copi down there?" came the high voice of the Officer of the Day.

Bernard looked up. "I'm here."

"There's a woman to see you. Up here in the passengers' bay."

Bernard slipped off the table. "Be right there."

"A woman in every port, Bernard?" Bertini smiled.

"Ha. I'm an artist, not a sailor." He smiled briefly at Bertini and left.

Bertini returned to the engine. There were nearly a hundred separate baseline tests, all of which he knew Praihm would want to see. For a moment, he stared at the monitor unseeing, depressed. He shook his head again. Soon, he had forgotten Praihm in the work. He did not hear the hatchway open and close.

"Do you live here?" she said.

"What?" He turned toward the voice, saw her, stared.

She laughed. "Bernard told me who you are. I am Rain Invierno." She shook hands with him in mock seriousness. Her hands were rough, dry. "There. Now we are introduced. I came back to the booth to ask about Cameron and found Bernard." She smiled at him. "Clever. I wanted to thank you so Bernard sent me here."

"Thank you, Bernard." *Damn you,* he thought, *mind your own business.*

She frowned at his tone. "You don't want to be thanked?"

"I didn't do it for thanks."

"Of course not." Rain took his hands and held them. "You're so warm." She looked around the engine room. "Do you live here among all these machines?"

He didn't answer immediately. "I have quarters down the hall, behind the engines."

She smiled at him again, leaning her head to one side and watching him. "Show me," she said softly.

Bernard called to him from across the bar. Bertini waded through the people, a slow careful boulder rolling downhill. There was a beer waiting for him on the table.

Bernard held up his mug. "To love."

Bertini laughed. "Christ. I'm not that far gone."

"Did you disappear for a week to see the sights? Shut up and drink."

They drained the mugs and Bernard signaled for more.

"It hasn't been a week—"

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"It has been—" Bernard counted on his fingers "—exactly ten days. *More* than a week. Don't argue with science. Where is she tonight?"

"She had a couple of commissions to work on so she went home. Rain doesn't live in the city. She just has a little apartment she rented here for the exhibition. Her home is further south."

"Commissions?"

"She's an artist. A wood sculptor."

"I knew she was good people."

Bertini looked down at the table for a moment, then back to Bernard. "She wants me to move in with her while we're here."

"Great. Do it *now*."

He shrugged. "I don't know. I've—"

"—never done anything like this before, right?"

Bertini nodded and looked morose. The waiter brought the beers and Bernard took them and set them down between himself and Bertini. "That's obvious," he said. "Don't worry, you're not going through something any twenty- or thirty-year-old hasn't gone through."

"I'm a hundred-and-two."

"Don't tell me about your arrested development."

"You think that's what it is?"

Bernard looked at the ceiling. "Can't you let it go for a while? You've been cramped up in your little two-by-four life all this time. Can't you just live a little? Move out with her for a while? Take a chance on something a little less pragmatic than an engine room? Besides, she's an artist. Take it from one who knows: she's good people."

"I'll think about it."

"I'll drink about it."

Bertini laughed and they touched mugs.

"Some kind of dive this is," mused Bernard darkly. "If it was a quality place, they'd have a fireplace for us to throw our mugs at."

"That's champagne. You throw glasses after a toast of champagne."

"Hmm." Bernard looked at his mug speculatively, then around the room. Across from them, he could see the cook stoking the wood oven. He drained his mug, leaped to his feet and threw the mug at the oven. It shot through the firepit door just as the cook closed it. They could hear the muffled pop as the glass exploded. "To love!" he cried.

"You crazy bastard!" Bertini stood and looked back toward the kitchen. The cook and the owner were shouting at one another. "Enough," Bertini said, grinning, and pulled Bernard after him into the night air.

The windows in Rain's house had no glass, and each had its own set of wind chimes. The wind blew through them continually and made music.

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The sky was saffron and blue, as close to sunrise or sunset as Afternoon ever reached. They sat drinking iced tea on the front porch bench, listening to the house. Rain held her knees to her chest. Bertini leaned forward, his elbows on his thighs.

"Do you like my house?" she asked, watching the sky.

"I don't know," he said slowly. "I don't think I understand it." He waved his hand back indoors.

"I like the sound of bells."

"Oh."

"I like light, too."

"That makes sense. You're an artist."

She shrugged. "I like that Afternoon never has night. There is no darkness."

"And there is never a full light."

"I am a shadowy, twilight person."

"No," he looked at his hands. "I don't think so."

She leaned forward and pulled him over to her. "You're being silly."

"I'm trying to understand you."

"Don't try."

He watched her face in the yellow light. "All right."

"Permission denied." Praihm watched Bertini closely. "You have to be near the ship."

"Sir, we are in port. The port authorities can handle anything that might happen."

"*Damn* the port authorities." Praihm stood and leaned heavily on his desk. "I want you here. I declare here and now the *Divers Arts* to be in a stage 1 emergency. All crew members are to remain available."

Bertini stared at him. "Captain Praihm, I am asking a special dispensation."

"For your local talent?" Praihm sat back down in his chair and placed the palms of his hands together. "Oh, I bet she's terrific. There's a lot these natives will do to be with a real, live engineer."

Bertini said nothing. Rage kept him quiet.

"I used to be a career officer, did you know that?" Praihm said conversationally. "In the navy, these things are done differently. I had an engineer on my ship just like you. He was an arrogant, low-life, stupid son of a bitch. The bastard called me a drunk. Me, his superior officer. He thought that he was above me, being an *engineer* and a member of the *guild*." He looked at Bertini. "He doesn't think that way now."

Silence fell for a long minute. Bertini thought if he moved, if he said a word, he would take Praihm apart like a doll. He held still, still as a lake or the saffron light. Finally, he took a pad of paper from Praihm's

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desk and wrote Rain's communication number. "I will be coming in every day. You can reach me here if you need me." He dropped the paper on the desk.

Praihm looked at the paper, then back at Bertini. "I'm the officer in charge of this ship. I'm ordering you to stay."

"I am not impressed, Captain." Bertini saluted him, about-faced and walked to the door.

"The advocate will hear of this. You're under house arrest!" Praihm called after him. Bertini said nothing. "I'll fly the ship myself."

Bertini stopped at the door and turned toward him. "That," he said carefully, "I would like to see."

"You never talk about the ship when you come here," she asked from the studio. It had been a month since he had moved down to Rain's house.

"There's nothing much to talk about." He sat on the sofa in the living room and looked through the glassless window. She had put up a new wind chime she had made, built of ringing pieces of glass and wood.

"It takes you a while to relax when you get here. Is anything wrong?"

He listened to her rummaging for artist things, things he did not know—chisels, knives, glues. She never seemed uneasy with him being there and he was comforted by that. He considered talking with her about Praihm. No, he thought. Leave your work at work. "Nothing's wrong. Things are a little tense right now." He shrugged. "It'll pass." As she left the studio he reached up and pulled her down to him.

Rain sat in his lap, laughing. "You have something in mind."

"Yes."

After a time, they lay molded together, shoulder under shoulder, thigh over thigh.

"This is crazy . . ." began Bertini.

"You're crazy."

Bertini shrugged. "I just don't understand this."

She sat up over him and he felt the tips of her breasts brush against him. He could smell her hair.

"Not even this much," she held her thumb and finger about an inch apart, "do you let go. Always, you try to think things through, to analyze, to understand." She kissed him gently on his eyes. "Enough of this."

"I love you." He held her.

"I am glad."

He felt obscurely disappointed. "Is that all?"

"You wanted a fanfare," she said softly. "And there's only me." She nestled again beside him, relaxed, comfortable.

What do I do now? he said to himself. *What do I do now?*

* * *

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Bernard lovingly set down Bertini's beer and held the other in both hands. He sat down on the other side of the bench. "In this bar, the first beer of the day is a magic experience."

Bertini smiled. "Is it so different in other bars, Bernard?"

"Of course not. All bars are joined together in the cosmic consciousness of bar-ness, a universal, total oneness with alcohol, a—"

"Enough!" laughed Bertini, lifting his hands in surrender. "I give in. No more, please."

"Where's Rain?"

"Working on a commission. I decided to get out of her hair for a couple of days. She doesn't work as much when I'm around."

Cameron sat up on the seat between them both and looked over the table edge at Bernard.

"Mine," said Bernard, pointing at the beer.

Cameron cocked his head at him.

"I think he has other ideas," said Bertini.

Bernard grunted and wiped out the ashtray with his napkin. He poured a small amount of beer into it and passed it over to Cameron. "Hope it shorts out your insides."

Cameron wrinkled his nose at the beer and muttered questioningly.

"Ungrateful wretch." Bernard drank some beer and pointed to his glass. "See? It's not poisoned."

Cameron muttered again and delicately began to drink.

"He's sensitive," said Bertini. "And he doesn't trust you. I don't blame him."

"The created always turns on its creator. Ah, Atlantis."

Bernard leaned back and observed the crowd. "Damn."

Bertini glanced at him. "What?"

"His ugliness just walked in."

Bertini sipped his beer. "It's a public place."

"That's a problem. They'll let just anyone in here."

The spontaneous laughter died between them, replaced by a rumbling anger and a whispering despair.

Bertini refused to look in Praihm's direction, but he could feel the captain coming to the table. Praihm stood directly in front of him. Bertini looked through him but he could smell the alcohol from where he sat.

"You are not in uniform, Engineer."

Bertini looked up at him. "You are drunk, Captain."

"I don't like you, Engineer."

"This is news?"

Praihm seemed to notice Cameron for the first time. "One of the artist's stupid toys." He tried to pet Cameron but was too drunk and clumsy and slapped him on the head. Cameron, startled, bit him. Praihm pulled back

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his hand and looked at the small, oozing puncture marks. He reached back and grabbed Cameron by the skin on his back with one hand, the other hand holding Cameron's head. Bernard started to rise. Bertini stopped him.

"Stop it, Captain." Bertini stared at him.

Praihm ignored him. "It is not wise to bite someone so much larger than you. Just so I could crush you."

"Captain," Bertini said quietly.

Something in his voice stopped Praihm. He looked down at Bertini.

"Put him down."

Nothing happened. The silence between them roared.

"Put him down, now." Bertini's voice became cold, menacing. He and Praihm stared at one another. Cameron whimpered.

"What would you do, Engineer?" Praihm said slowly. "How much is such a toy worth to you? Your rating? Prison?" He dropped Cameron on the table with contempt. The bear ran to Bertini and lay in his lap.

Mechanically, Bertini petted him. "You can't get to me that way, Captain."

"I am not trying to get to you at all, Engineer," Praihm said innocently. "I am not satisfied with your work. So sad." He straightened and looked down at them. "Do it again. This time, do it right. Do it as if we were going to leave tomorrow."

He turned and left them.

Bertini stared after him.

"Are you all right?" asked Bernard.

He did not answer immediately. Slowly, he leaned back and sipped his beer, watching Praihm leave the bar. "Yeah. I'm all right."

She carved the wood in bursts: a sudden furious movement, a flurry of chips, then she stopped and felt the wood, looking at it critically.

"Which is more important, touching the wood or seeing it?" Bertini asked.

"Touching it," she said instantly, watching the wood.

"Hm."

They were in her studio. He liked to watch her work and she never seemed to mind. It was precious to him, this watching, and he was careful not to abuse it. But today he felt tense, because of Praihm, because of his helplessness, because he was leaving in less than a month.

"I'm leaving soon," he said slowly.

She looked up at him. "Let me finish this first before we talk about that."

He nodded and left the studio for the front porch. There, he listened to the chimes and watched the constant afternoon sky. Frowning, he

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went back inside for a beer and returned to the bench. After a time, she joined him.

"It's a bit early for a beer," she said as she sat next to him.

"It's late afternoon. Look at the sun."

She laughed. "True."

"I want you to wait for me. Wait until I come back."

She did not answer him but watched the sky. "I'm not good at waiting. I always want things now."

"I have to leave to keep my rating. I'll come back."

"When?"

"Inside of a year."

She shook her head. "I can't wait that long." She looked at him, shrugged. "Something will work out."

"But—" *No,* he cried out inside. *Don't leave me.*

She put a finger on his lips and he stopped.

He couldn't speak for many minutes. Anger blew through him like a hot wind. *Do something,* he thought. He couldn't. If he had so little, he couldn't risk it. If he had her only for the moment, he wanted all the moment he could have. Bertini watched her face. It appeared as warm, as loving as ever. He didn't understand. He just didn't understand. "At least *think* about waiting."

"I'll think about it," she said. She smiled as she watched the sky.

He was rechecking the phase modulation when the communicator chimed. "Ranft. What is it?" he said testily.

"My, my. Getting irritable, aren't we?"

Bertini breathed deeply. "What is it, Praihm?"

"We leave at 1400 hours."

"What? We have a month left here! What the hell are you trying to pull?"

"It's very simple, Ranft." Across the monitor, the captain put the fingers of each hand together. "The appropriations of the MFA have been shifted around. The *Divers Arts* grant is no more. Poof."

"You're doing this to me—"

Praihm laughed. "Do you really think you're that important? Or that I would give up my captaincy for *you*? I had nothing to do with this."

Bertini stared at him. "When did this happen?"

"Oh, let's see." Praihm looked up at the ceiling. "I heard about it maybe a month ago? We received shipping orders maybe a week ago? Maybe, two weeks ago? Maybe three? I really can't remember exactly."

"You bastard."

"Such language."

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It was a little over an hour to Rain's, say two and a half hours round trip. It was nine o'clock now— "I'll be back on board before 1400."

Praihm sighed. "No, we can't have that."

"Why not?" Control, he had to maintain control.

"An engineer must be at his post at least six hours before takeoff. It's very clear in the merchant marine regulations." Praihm shook his head. "In the navy, of course, we could do things a little differently. But with only one engineer, I can't take the chance. I am so sorry."

"Look, I've been checking the instruments for days. I'll be back at least an hour before the launch." He was begging and he knew it, and hated himself for it. "Please."

"It is so nice to be appreciated."

"Praihm!"

"You know," mused Praihm. "You're just like him. Oh, he was shorter and paler and talked a lot more—but you're just alike. I never could get him afterwards. Too bad." He chuckled and shook his head. "He left ships altogether and went into real estate." He looked at Bertini. "But I've got you. And you'll do." His voice went cold. "Leave the ship and I'll have your rating on a plate." The screen went dark.

Bertini stared at the blank screen. He called Bernard.

"Yeah?" Bernard's voice sounded sleepy.

"The ship's leaving at 1400 hours. You've—" he stopped. He'd begged from Praihm, now he was going to beg from Bernard. *Have you no pride?* he asked himself. *No,* he answered, *not at all.* "I need your help."

"Yeah. Wait a second." Bernard closed his eyes and breathed deeply for a few moments. "Okay." His voice was clear. "What's going on?"

"The ship's leaving in about five hours. The grant's been canceled. Praihm won't let me say goodbye to Rain." He paused. "Would you go for me?"

"Sure. What do you want me to say?"

Bertini didn't respond immediately. "Say I love her. Say I want her to wait for me. Say I'll be back before the year—before the *month* is through." He ran his hands through his hair. "Hell, Bernard. You *know* what I want to say. Say it for me."

Bernard grinned. "You got it."

Bertini smiled at him. "Thanks."

Bernard nodded and signed off.

"Yeah," Bertini said to the empty air. He began firing up the ship.

Checking out the engines on a starship does not take long—perhaps an hour, more or less. The time is spent reviewing the results of the automatic diagnostics. The preflight exercises for the engineer take much longer. Bertini was plugged in and warming up when Bernard returned.

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He would have to talk to Bernard when the takeoff and in-system flying was done.

He did not allow himself to be distracted. He flexed his fingers and the attitude jets hissed and spurted, moved his thighs and legs and the main thrusters rumbled. Bertini watched the sky above him, alive with glittering red tracings of the solar wind, shiny with radiation. He was the Colossus of Rhodes, Atlas before he held the world, Zeus standing on Olympus ready to unleash thunderbolts. He shook himself slightly, knowing it would cause a tremor throughout the ship. *Just enough to make Praihm nervous.* His perception was as tall as the orbiting satellites, as fine as their precise telescopes. From this vantage point, he could see halfway around the planet. He watched the land surrounding Rain's house thus for a long time, waiting for the takeoff order from the port authority. Finally, the order came. He gathered himself and leaped into the air. The thrusters roared and soon he was beyond the atmosphere.

Damn you, Praihm, he cried. He demanded more capacity from the thrusters and felt the radiation mount in the engine room. *Hell with it,* he thought in anger. They didn't harden him for nothing. Warning signals were made known to him. He ignored them, knowing what his body could take. He needed this release, this catharsis.

He bellowed and the *Divers Arts* moved away from Afternoon. In a day, it was ready to coast toward the edge of the system. Only then did he let the engines cool and the radiation fall. He eased back into his body with the same sense as putting on an old and comfortable set of clothes. He opened his eyes and sat up.

"She wasn't there."

"Oh." Bertini stared at the table. On the monitor, Bernard looked unsure of what to say next.

"You want me to come down?"

Automatically, he looked at the instruments. "You can't. The radiation's still too high."

"Yeah." Bernard paused, bit his lip. "You can send a message back to the port authority. They'll relay it to her."

"Yeah." He nodded slowly. "I'll do that. It was just, just that I wanted someone to tell her in person."

"I know."

Bertini signed off. He rubbed his face. He felt tired, aching. He'd let the radiation level get a little out of hand. Nothing serious, but he'd feel it for a few days. His body felt grimy, soiled with the emotional residue. He began to take off his uniform as he walked toward his quarters. Before he could turn on the light, someone reached for him and held him, someone soft.

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He knew who it was before he turned on the light.

"I told you I wouldn't wait," Rain said, looking up at him in the sudden glare. Her eyes were bloodshot. There were red spots on her cheeks, tracings of broken veins, and her lips seemed too thin.

"Why didn't you tell me?" He could barely speak around the cold knot in his throat.

"I wasn't sure." She shrugged. "I was still thinking."

"How did you get in here?" *Oh, God.*

She smiled, coughed. "The captain let me in. I had to pay him, of course."

"Of course." He said hollowly. "You've been in here since yesterday?"

"Since just before you took off." She frowned. "I don't feel very well."

He nodded dumbly and sat on the bed. She stood over him, her hands on his shoulders. Bertini held her to him. You're dead. I killed you and you're dead.

"I love you, you know?" She sounded anxious, then started trembling. She sat next to him. "I feel ill."

He stood and helped her lie down. Then he checked the radiation level. It was safe now. He triggered the communicator. "Sick bay, please." The medical officer answered.

After a short conversation, the officer signed off and he returned to Rain. She had been sick on the floor.

He began to clean it up.

"I'm sorry."

"It's all right."

"Flying doesn't seem to agree with me." She tried to smile.

"A doctor's coming. Rest."

She settled back weakly. "I found I didn't want you to leave. I wanted to be with you." She smiled. "Now, I am."

Bertini started to cry.

Bernard met him just outside of sick bay. He was standing in the middle of the room, his hands in his pockets and staring at the wall.

"Bertini?" he said tentatively.

Bertini looked around and saw Bernard, nodded. "Yeah. I'm here."

"How is she?"

Bertini shrugged. "According to everything I know she's already dead but still breathing. The doctor's trying to prove me wrong."

Bernard sat down on the couch at one end of the room. After a moment, Bertini turned and joined him. "Praihm said he was sorry things happened this way."

Bertini barked a short laugh. "Right. Praihm took a bribe from her to stowaway, *then* he put her in the engine room."

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"It's not safe there."

"This is news? Of course, it's not safe there. But under normal circumstances it's not deadly. I was angry and stressed the engines getting out of there. I killed her." He didn't speak for a moment. "Praihm was watching the engine room status. It could fluctuate for a minute or an hour and he'd miss it, but not for a day. He knew. He *knew*. He watched it climb, knowing she was in there, knowing it was withering her, shriveling her, killing her moment by moment—"

"Stop it."

Bertini fell silent. "Yeah," he said at last. "Praihm doesn't matter, anyway. He lives only as long as Rain does."

"What does that mean?"

Bertini looked at him with no expression. "I'm going to kill him."

The doctor shook his head as he let Bertini in to see her. So be it.

Rain looked up and smiled as he came in. The smile vanished and her face looked gray. "I'm very sick," she said slowly and carefully. "The doctor says I will die."

Bertini nodded. He sat on the edge of the bed, his shoulders bowed. "I'm sorry."

She smiled at him again. "This much," she held her fingers an inch apart, "you give yourself. Always the control. If you can't cause it to happen, you take the blame for it. Please. I die, not you."

Bertini shrugged.

Cameron pushed his way out from under the covers.

"Bernard brought him," she said. "He found him in the engine room."

Bertini nodded again. Even this much for her, he thought, you did not do.

She took his hand. "You must take him for me."

He took Cameron in his lap. "Don't worry about him." Her face was gray. Her eyes didn't seem to focus too well.

"I'm sleepy." She paused, then grasped his hand in both of hers, held it to her cheek. He felt the tears and gathered her into his arms. "Will you stay here while I'm asleep?" she asked softly.

"Of course."

He held her for a long time. "You're so warm," she murmured as she fell asleep, and Bertini did not know whether she was talking about him or Cameron. Only then did she release him and he eased her back into the bed.

She never woke up.

Two days later he stood in the viewing salon before the main port, watching the stars above and Afternoon below. The port authority men

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would be docking soon, coming for him. There was still blood on parts of his clothing. Cameron sat at his feet, leaning against him. He picked up the animal, holding him so tightly Cameron squirmed against him. *It is over,* he thought. He relaxed and Cameron watched through the window with him.

Finally, Bertini heard someone behind him. He turned.

It was Bernard. "They're here."

Bertini nodded, and carrying Cameron, he went to meet them. ●

—For Pat

cold rust grit: end of dreams

sonnet:

About each fifteenth year, the sands of Mars
hang close to us, in what astronomers
call opposition. Train a telescope
(as I did thirty years ago) that far,
though, and you'll see what only amateurs
seek out today: just the vaguest hope
of details grace a blurry blob of red—
a place where dreams could grow. But now, instead,
detailed maps from Mariner in space
(and Viking's scoop of rusty sand) replace
our useful fantasies. It's real estate
now: the mind's eye can't liberate
the eye's mind today. Where once grand
canals coursed life, today is sterile sand.

rubaiyat:

But those were just machines, and they could err . . .

that lifeless scoop might just mean life is rare
on arid worlds. I'll wait until a human
eye and brain can look around with care.

—Joe Haldeman

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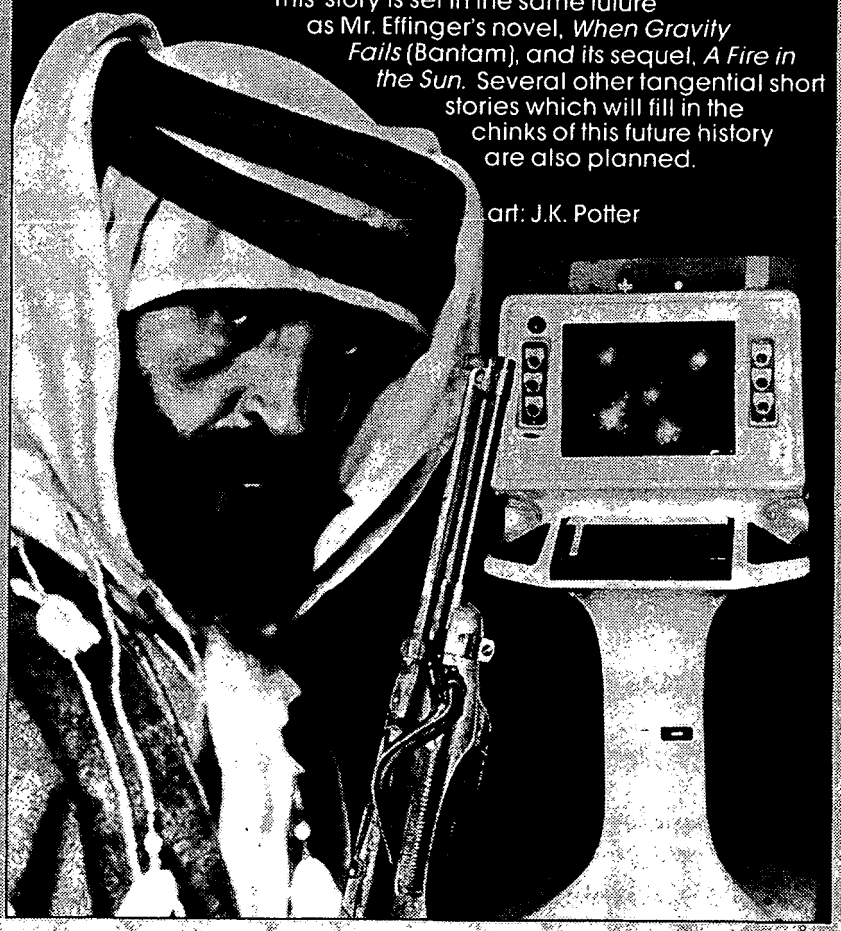
KING OF THE CYBER RIFLES

by George Alec Effinger

This story is set in the same future as Mr. Effinger's novel, *When Gravity Fails* (Bantam), and its sequel, *A Fire in the Sun*. Several other tangential short stories which will fill in the chinks of this future history are also planned.

art: J.K. Potter



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Jân Muhammad stopped halfway up the stony hill and put down his double armload of dry sticks. By the Persian calendar, it was the second week of Mordaad, the hottest part of the summer. What little grass grew on his hillside was already burnt brown for lack of rain. The dust was thick and the tumbled red rocks gave off an arid, baked smell. Jân Muhammad mopped the perspiration from his forehead with the sleeve of his uniform tunic. Flies buzzed all around his head, but he had long ago given up trying to chase them away. High overhead, the sun was a plate of brass hanging motionless. Jân Muhammad looked down reluctantly at his burden of firewood, then opened the catch at the throat of his tunic. Sand and grit had worked down under his collar and had begun to rub his neck raw. He wished he had enough water to rinse his sweat-streaked skin.

He carried the wood up the rest of the way to the observation post. He had a box for the fuel inside the small bunker, so he wouldn't need to step outside again to fetch it. If he were under attack and the broken branches were outside, he'd have to suffer in the icy night of the wasteland, or do without hot soup and tea. It was still too early in the day to think of lighting the stove, though. He had a lot of work to do before evening.

The narrow room where he ate, slept, kept watch, and fought was solidly built of roughly dressed stone and cement. He had a cot and a chair he'd lashed together himself out of tree limbs, a blanket, a jug of water and a basin, another basin for evacuation, a small stove, and his data deck. He did not understand how the power source worked. It was buried on the hillside beside the observation post, and supplied current to the data deck, the weapons systems, the portable communications equipment, and two bare light bulbs that glared starkly through the long, empty nights. The army had not seen fit to give him an electric stove or any other conveniences. Jân Muhammad supposed they didn't want him to get too comfortable. He could have reassured them on that point.

Like a crack of thunder from a clear sky, a mortar shell ripped a hole in the thin soil two hundred yards downslope. Jân Muhammad stood in the center of his small room, cursing softly. He'd just been thinking about a Mohâjerân raid, and now their deafening shellbursts were walking slowly up toward his observation post, leaving craters like the devastating footprints of an invisible giant. The armed refugees had tried many times in the last year to pry the lonely soldier from his defensive position; but although they had stolen grenades, machine guns, and small arms, they had no leadership, no discipline, no strategies, and no definite goals. They were just a large mob in possession of some sophisticated weapons. They were poorly matched against Jân Muhammad and his

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data deck. He sat down calmly at his work space. He punched the diagnostic key while he grabbed the red plastic command module and chipped it onto the anterior implant plug at the crown of his skull. He gasped as the hot, stale-smelling observation post melted away. His brain began to receive information only through the data deck. He saw a panoramic view of his hilltop, the rugged pass to the west, and the cracked, dry plain to the east. The view was assembled from input from many holocameras hidden in the surrounding area, processed through the data deck, and presented to Jân Muhammad in a view he might have if he were hovering peacefully some fifty feet in the air. It took him a moment to let go of his body's senses and surrender to the deck. As much as he liked chipping in, he resisted for an instant each time, with a tingling, absurd fear that on this occasion he wouldn't be able to disengage.

The diagnostic lights were all burning green, so Jân Muhammad chipped the black personality module onto his posterior implant plug. Now it wasn't his physical environment that vanished, but Jân Muhammad himself. His own anxious, impetuous identity faded beneath an artificial construct wired into the black moddy. His brain was usurped by a fictional soldier, as perfect as the military programmers could make him: competent, cool, fiercely loyal, and absolutely fearless. With his distant sensors, Jân Muhammad watched the mortar shells blasting all around him, searching with terrible fingers for the stone bunker. The explosions didn't concern him. He tapped a few keys on the data deck and called up a magnified scan of the eastern perimeter. He caught the glitter of sunlight on metal at six hundred yards, near a tall shoulder of rock. Without needing to put his request into words, he got the precise coordinates of the target from the data deck. He fired a salvo of demolition rockets, waited fifteen seconds, and fired a second round. He watched twenty or thirty people, men and women, young and old, all dressed in rags and carrying rifles, sprint from the blasted rocks toward new shelter across fifty yards of open plain. Jân Muhammad put down a blaze of heavy machine gun fire; none of the rebels reached their cover alive.

He turned his attention to the Mohâjerân mortars. The attackers didn't know how to use the weapons. Instead of making patterned searches, the mortar shells seemed to wobble all over the landscape. It would be only luck if one happened to find its target. Jân Muhammad was now conscious of the fact that sooner or later, the Mohâjerân might get lucky. He deduced that there couldn't be more than two mortars in operation. He analyzed the parabolic paths of a dozen shells and calculated where each mortar was hidden. He fired three explosive rockets and two fragmentation shells at the targets; a moment later, stillness settled over the hillside, broken only by the occasional racket of Mohâjerân rifle-fire.

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Jân Muhammad relaxed a little, knowing that he had eliminated the chief danger. Through his amplifiers he heard the shrill, trilling war cry, *"Allah akbar!"* Two squads of refugees charged up the hillside, one on the north slope, the other a quarter of the way around on the western side. It was suicide. Jân Muhammad's machine guns opened up on both detachments; it only took a few seconds to dispose of all of them. He would have to go out later and throw all the corpses into the defile. That irritated him more than anything else.

The rest of the Mohâjerân fled now, some shrieking and wailing for their dead comrades. Jân Muhammad watched them go, letting them escape. He didn't feel like cutting them down with machine gun bullets or rockets. He didn't feel like dealing with any more dead bodies around his post than he had to. They'd come back, they'd definitely come back; he'd kill them all another day. He popped the personality moddy out first, then the command moddy. He gasped again as his heightened senses and abilities fell away. He was once again limited to his own mortal body. The fatigue, fear, hunger, and thirst that had been obscured by the moddies flooded through him. He leaned forward and rested his head wearily on his arms. He still had his chores to finish.

By the time he'd finished breaking up the firewood and stowing it in the box, he heard a man's voice calling to him from down on the hill. "Ya sarbaaz!" came the high-pitched, wavering cry. It was Rostam, who came out from the village of Ashnistan twice a week with supplies.

Jân Muhammad grunted. He was looking forward to the goat cheese and fresh bread the old man was bringing. Quickly he threw a handful of sticks onto the crumbling coals in the stove and blew the fire into life. He poured water from a hanging goatskin into a small teapot and put it on to boil.

"Ya sarbaaz! Soldier! Turn off your guns!"

Jân Muhammad made sure that the scrawny, bearded trader was alone, then slapped off the automatic ranging and firing mechanisms. Then he went outside. "It's all right, O my uncle. Come on up." He watched Rostam pick his way slowly among the rocks, leading his raw-boned, red-eyed mule.

When Rostam came close enough so that he didn't need to shout, he gave Jân Muhammad a nod. "Salâm alêkom," he said hoarsely.

"Alêkom-os-salâm," said Jân Muhammad. "Come inside, I'm making tea."

"Thank you, my son." The old man lifted a coarse sack from the mule's back and followed the soldier into the stone strongpoint.

Jân Muhammad checked the water, but it wasn't hot yet. He turned back and offered Rostam the single chair in the bunker; he himself sat down on the edge of the cot. After a moment, he realized that the old

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man was staring at him. Jân Muhammad had forgotten to put his cap back on. Rostam was looking at the two chrome-steel plugs in the young man's skull. The soldier leaned forward, grabbed his tan forage cap from where it lay on his data monitor, and jammed it low over his brow.

The old man pushed his lips out, then in, then out again. "Aga, I've brought you flour, lard, cheese, tea, and a little dried meat," he said. "I've also brought you what we talked about a week ago."

Jân Muhammad raised his eyebrows.

Rostam looked around himself nervously, as if there were listening devices hidden in the bare stone room. As a matter of fact, the comm unit in the military data deck could transmit everything that was said in the observation post, but Jân Muhammad had learned how to cut himself out of the net. He preferred to use the portable equipment. If he ever needed to use the deck's link—if, for instance, the portable unit was disabled—he knew how to patch himself back in. "Don't worry, O my uncle, we can talk."

Rostam let out his breath in a rattling sigh. "I have brought you tobacco and some white liquor. I've brought magazines, too, aga. They're printed in some language, I don't know which, but they have good pictures. You know what I mean? Good pictures?"

Jân Muhammad nodded wearily. Rostam was his one connection to the village, to the world beyond his observation post. The soldier was not permitted to leave his small stony domain. From what his superiors said, this one hill guarding an unused pass through the Persian mountains was the key to the future of the Mahdi's army, a vital position that guaranteed the inevitable Islamic conquest. Jân Muhammad didn't believe all that, of course. He only knew that the post and the rocky defile below were his responsibility, and he was doomed—"honored," in the words of his sergeant—to remain there like a mad hermit saint until he was killed by Mohâjerân raiders or until the rest of the world acknowledged the supremacy of the young savior, whichever came first.

The young soldier jingled his few remaining coins in his pocket. The payroll officer wouldn't be coming by for at least another two weeks. Jân Muhammad guessed that before then, as usual, he would have to go a week or ten days without meat and tobacco. "How much do you want?" he asked.

"Twenty tumân, aga," said Rostam.

The soldier gave him a sharp look. The price was twice what the supplies were worth.

"Eighteen tumân," said Rostam. "It is getting difficult for me to bring these things to you, my son. The shopkeeper in the village has sympathies with the Mohâjerân, he does not like selling me these things, knowing that they come to you. He charges me more than his other customers.

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And I am not as strong as I used to be, aga. The long journey from the village—"

"All right, I'll give you sixteen."

"You are the soul of your father," murmured Rostam, catching the coins.

"You'd better go away," said Jân Muhammad. He was suddenly in a hurry to see the old man on his way back down the hill. "If the Mohâjerân should return while you're here, I can't guarantee that you'll be safe."

Rostam's eyes opened wide. He got slowly to his feet. "You are right, my son. Thank you. Praise be to Allah for your kindness."

"May you go in peace, O my uncle." He watched as the old man hurried as fast as he could out of the bunker and down the hill. Rostam picked up a heavy stick and began beating his mule, which didn't seem to pay any attention to the blows; it neither quickened its pace nor strayed from its path. Jân Muhammad waited until both man and animal were out of sight, then he took the water off the stove and dropped a healthy pinch of tea into the pot.

When he had finished his refreshment and begun stowing his supplies, the data deck interrupted him with a recorded call of a muezzin. Jân Muhammad immediately let a bag of flour he held fall onto his cot. He went to the deck and made a quick security check of the area outside. Then he went to the goatskin and let out a little water into his hands. He thought, "I perform the ablutions to prepare myself for prayer and seeking the nearness of Allah." He drew his moist right hand briskly down from his hairline to his chin. He removed a ring on his right hand and quickly washed his right arm from elbow to fingertips. He did the same with his left arm. He drew the wet fingers of his right hand from the middle of his head forward to the hairline. He put the heel of his right hand on the toes of his right foot, and brought his fingers up to the ankle, then washed his left foot. He took his prayer rug and went outside, where he stood facing the southwest, toward the Kaaba in Mecca. While he prayed, all thoughts of his bloody battle that morning vanished. As usual, he murmured a prayer for the health of the Mahdi, and for his quick victory over the unbelievers. Jân Muhammad also added a prayer for the Muslims—like those he fought now in Mazanderan—who were in error, who had gone astray and did not recognize the Messiah who had come out of what had once been Algeria.

After his devotions, he couldn't put off the unpleasant task of tending to the slain Mohâjerân any longer. He returned the prayer rug to its place, made another security check, then decided to chip in a personality module to take his mind off his work. He chose a blue plastic moddy manufactured in Riyeah, and settled it in place on his anterior plug. He chipped in three add-ons as well, one that would override his fatigue,

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one to override thirst, and a third that contained the entire text of the noble Qur'ân.

The moddy took possession of his consciousness and transported him from the barren Persian landscape to a fully-realized fantasy of Paradise. He wasn't aware of the morbid labor he was performing. It was as if Jân Muhammad's soul had left his body, or as if he had been lifted physically, still alive, into Heaven. Wonder and reverence enthralled him. Here was his reward for a lifetime of faithfulness. Here was ample repayment for all the hardships he had endured for the sake of his love for Allah. He was refreshed, and the pleasures of Paradise were far greater than any his earthly imagination could have invented. What he had forsaken in life was now his to enjoy. The most delicious wine gurgled from exquisite fountains. Houris more beautiful than any mortal woman smiled at him and made him welcome. But above everything else was the joy of his union with God. He felt a terrible sadness when he thought of the unbelievers, how they had scorned the Straight Path and would never know this peace.

Still marveling at everything he witnessed, Jân Muhammad slowly lifted a hand to his head and popped the moddy out. He stood squinting in the bright glare of the sun for a few seconds, confused as the real world claimed him once again. He let out a deep sigh. It was good to be able to carry a bit of Paradise with him, but it was always a painful jolt to be thrust back into his own mind, faced again with his worldly troubles. The lingering effect of the moddy was that he knew that Paradise, when he was accepted into it in truth, would be inexpressibly more blessed than what the moddy designers had offered him. "Praise be to the Lord of the Worlds," said Jân Muhammad.

He stood a few yards from his observation post, looking down into the Tang-e-Kuffâr, the Pass of the Infidels; many feet below, the broken bodies of the Mohâjerân men and women lay on the craggy floor of the defile. Their worthless automatic rifles, pistols, and grenades were now piled in a heap at the edge of the cliff. Jân Muhammad frowned, then turned and went back into the bunker.

Toward nightfall, while making another scheduled security check, he noticed movement at the northeast end of the pass. He called for greater magnification. Now he was certain; a small party, maybe twenty-five or thirty people, was moving slowly and carefully among the rocks. He watched as they stopped and knelt beside the corpses. Some of the Mohâjerân glanced upward. Jân Muhammad could see the hatred on their faces. A few of them unslung their rifles and held them ready, as if Jân Muhammad might suddenly appear, alone and vulnerable, from behind a pile of red boulders. At last, the refugees left their dead fellows and continued their cautious way through the pass. Through the data

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deck, Jân Muhammad could hear their low murmurs, but could not make out any of their words.

He trained his guns on the rebels in the front of the column, fed the position and distance information from the data deck to the firing control, and watched as the Mohâjerân crept silently out of his field of vision. One by one, they disappeared from view through the ragged southern cut of the Tang-e-Kuffâr. He felt a helpless rage build in him, then a swift, cold fear. He hadn't fired a shot. He'd permitted every one of the enemy to escape unscathed. How could that be? "By the life of my eyes," he swore. He was no traitor, no coward. He knew the significance of what had happened: the Mohâjerân had slipped through his guard to the desolate valley beyond. They were free now to join others of the growing refugee mob, to attack the Mahdi's Persian Conciliatory Army where it was weakest. Every rebel that got by Jân Muhammad meant injury to the Mahdi, an obstacle to the victory of orthodox Islam. Jân Muhammad slammed the data deck with a fist in frustration. He had to find out what had prevented him from destroying these Mohâjerân.

He tapped the diagnostic key on the data deck. Again all the test lights lit green. His deck was in perfect condition, both hardware and software. The problem was not with the deck or the weapons systems; it was with himself. That would be more difficult to deal with. He popped the military personality moddy. His anger and dread intensified, for Jân Muhammad was less able to confront this crisis than the electronic mind built into the moddy. With the command moddy still chipped in, he picked a spot high on the walls of the mountain pass and swung his machine guns and rocket launchers to bear on it. He wanted to let loose a few shots, but somehow the desire to fire wasn't translated into a mental command. Nothing happened. No sound disturbed the chilly stillness of the twilight.

With a trembling hand, Jân Muhammad popped the command moddy out. The terrible truth was that he was now helpless and defenseless. He had a mighty arsenal linked to his data deck; but if he was somehow blocked from using it, he might as well be sitting on the hilltop with nothing more deadly than a slingshot. If the Mohâjerân learned the truth, he could be overwhelmed and murdered before the next day was out.

The thing to do now was contact his platoon sergeant. He used the portable transmitter. It took a few minutes to calculate the proper frequency for the day, tune the scrambler, identify himself to his headquarters and be recognized, and get patched through to Sergeant Abadani. He had to wait a long while. Finally, he heard the sergeant's grumbling, cheerless voice. "Listen, sarbaaz, I'm going to tell *you* why you called me. Let me know if I'm right. You saw some goddamn Mohâjerân mucks and you proceeded to set up your attack by the num-

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bers. Everything was fine until it was time to fire. Then you couldn't. You didn't stop a single one of the bastards. Right?"

Jân Muhammad was startled. "Right, Sarge. How—?"

"You're not the only one that's happened to today. Now, where are you?"

"The Tang-e-Kuffâr."

"Yeah. Well, seven of your buddies have called in with the same story. What we've figured is that somebody has entered your station and fed a baggie to your data deck. That's what happened to the other seven posts."

"But nobody has access to my deck but me."

"That's what they all said. But in every case, they could think of some Persian who had been permitted inside the bunker."

Jân Muhammad opened his mouth to protest, then closed it again. "There's an old man from Ashnistan who brings me my food. He's such a feeble old relic that I usually make him tea and let him rest inside my bunker."

"And you like talking to him, too, right? Against orders?"

"Yes," Jân Muhammad admitted. "I don't get to see anyone else."

"Is he your likely suspect?"

"He's the *only* suspect, Sarge."

"Good. Well, then, the next time you see him, you're going to have to bump him."

Jân Muhammad stared at the transmitter for a moment. "Maybe it would be better not to," he said.

"The orders are to get rid of these saboteurs."

"But, Sarge, the Mohâjerân are behind all this. When they know their agent has done what he's supposed to, they're sure they're safe. They can just sneak through the pass whenever they want. I can't use my guns or rockets. But if I kill old Rostam, they'll know something's up. They'll know we're on to them. If I just act normally and let Rostam think he's safe, I may be able to account for a few refugee patrols before they catch on and start their frontal attacks again. That's if I can get my weapons system operational again."

"Don't worry about that. We'll have a tech team out to you tomorrow as soon as we can." Now it was the sergeant's turn to fall silent for a few seconds. "You might have an idea there, sarbaaz. I'll mention it to the lieutenant."

"So what's wrong with my data deck, then?"

Sergeant Abadani gave a humorless laugh. "You don't know what a baggie is?"

"I'm a gunner, Sarge, I'm not a deck expert."

"You're supposed to be both. Your Persian slipped a bubble microplate

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into your deck, just long enough for your deck to copy it and add it to its memory. It wasn't an assassin program, but it was a crippler. Your deck won't respond to certain orders now, not through your cyber link. It'll feed you sensory input and perform harmless functions, but it won't take any sort of offensive or defensive action. It's like your spy tied a little invisible bag around a part of your deck's operating system, isolating it and making it inaccessible to you. Until tomorrow, when we can slice out the baggie."

"Well, what the hell am I supposed to do until then? What if I'm attacked?"

"You probably won't be. Like you said, the rebels figure you're more useful the way you are, with your teeth pulled. They don't want to give the show away. They'll just parade a few more units through the pass."

Jân Muhammad frowned. "Is there any way I can operate the weapons system the hard way? Bypassing the cyber link?"

"Sure," said Sergeant Abadani, "but you said you weren't an expert. There's a sequence of options that will let you fire any of your guns and rockets by selecting from a series of menus. It takes a lot of time. If you've never worked with it, it probably won't be any use to you."

"But it's better than letting those bastards get by me. I hate the idea of watching them troop past like a gang of schoolchildren on a holiday."

"Your attitude's all right, sarbaaz, but you don't know what you're talking about." Then the sergeant told his gunner how to request the firing control menus from the data deck.

"That won't be bagged, too?" asked Jân Muhammad.

"It wasn't on the other seven decks."

"All right, Sarge."

"Report back if you see any action. We'll be there sometime tomorrow. Now, clear the air."

Jân Muhammad signed off. He tapped in the commands that called up the first of the attack menus.

Do you wish to activate automatic rifles?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no
Do you wish to activate submachine guns?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no
Do you wish to activate heavy machine guns?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no
Do you wish to activate 40 millimeter cannons?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no
Do you wish to activate trench mortars?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no
Do you wish to activate light artillery?

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Type 1 = yes, 0 = no
Do you wish to activate antitank guns?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no
Do you wish to activate antiaircraft guns?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no

There was a second menu that presented him choices of rockets and bombs. A third menu let him decide about activating the antipersonnel and antitank mines buried on the hillside and in the defile. It took Jân Muhammad a quarter of an hour to go through the entire sequence. If he had initiated the selection process just when he'd spotted a party of Mohâjerân, they'd have run safely through the pass before he was finished. And he hadn't even begun the targeting and firing procedures. The sergeant had been right; this was worse than useless.

He chipped in the command moddy and let his deck-enhanced senses make certain there were no Mohâjerân nearby. He chose a flat place on the floor of the Tang-e-Kuffâr that the rebels would have to cross in order to flee into the valley beyond. Caught for a moment in the open, they would have to choose between running a hopeless race through a storm of machine gun bullets or giving up and retracing the way they'd come. Jân Muhammad ran through the time-consuming authorized procedures. Through the cyber link, he knew the co-ordinates in three dimensions of every point within range of the cameras. He tried firing a shot with the link, experiencing the guns as extensions of his augmented mind, willing them to open up on the target. Jân Muhammad sighed, then called up the attack menu.

Do you wish to fire submachine guns?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no

Jân typed 1.

Do you wish continuous fire?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no

Jân Muhammad typed 0.

How many rounds do you wish to fire?

Jân Muhammad typed 5.

To commence firing on your mark, type 1.

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When he typed 1, each submachine gun that could bear on the target spat five rounds into the hard-packed earth. Although it was a dark, moonless night, the data deck let him see the clouds of flying rock chips and dust. He felt better knowing that he could still operate his weapons, even in this clumsy way. He relaxed for the first time since early in the day, when he'd failed to stop the Mohâjerân party from making their defiant escape.

Just before dawn, after Jân Muhammad had succumbed to fatigue and was suffering through an uneasy dream of childhood and poverty, an alarm woke him. He swung groggily off his cot and leaned over the data deck, fumbling the command moddy and the military personality moddy into place. He felt a familiar elation as the confining bunker dissolved, replaced by an immediate awareness of every movement, every scent, every sound around his post. Another small unit of Mohâjerân was picking its way through the mountain pass. They were moving boldly, confidently, knowing that Jân Muhammad's armaments were disabled. He had an unpleasant surprise waiting for them. When the first of the refugees reached the target, he jabbed his finger down on the 1 key. The shrill scream of the machine gun bullets ricocheting off rocks filled the narrow pass. Three unfortunate people at the head of the column howled and fell wounded to the red dirt. After a short while, however, the Mohâjerân realized that all the machine gun fire was aimed at one place. They began to move cautiously around that area, giving it as much room as they could. One by one, they gathered courage and slipped by to one side.

Jân Muhammad cursed. Of course, he could retarget the machine guns to another point, but the same thing would happen again. The enemy would realize they were safe elsewhere in the defile. And it was pointless to aim the guns by tapping information into the data deck. The refugees would all be gone long before he got the next position set up.

Jân Muhammad hurried outside. The deep blue sky of the false dawn and a cool breeze gave the morning an innocence that was pure illusion. Jân Muhammad knelt briefly on the edge of the cliff, glaring down in frustration, until a few shots from below made him scuttle back. That gave him an idea. Not far away, the weapons of the Mohâjerân he'd killed were stacked together until headquarters sent someone to collect them. Jân Muhammad grabbed a plastic and alloy steel automatic rifle. He examined it quickly; it was in disgraceful condition, but with luck it wouldn't blow up in his face. He lay down with his head raised just high enough to see over the edge.

Jân Muhammad waited for a chance to avenge the insult they'd paid him. When he saw a flicker of motion, he squeezed off a few rounds and was gratified to hear a shrill cry of pain. He still had his command moddy

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chipped in, so he was getting an unbroken view of the pass from one end to the other. He could see where each rebel had concealed himself. Well, he thought, they had neutralized his data deck and his heavy weapons, but they were wrong if they thought he was going to concede defeat. He'd fight if he was reduced to throwing rocks and stones. He grinned as he looked down patiently from the cyber link, down at his enemy. They didn't know how exposed they were.

Besides the rifles, Jân Muhammad had captured a number of grenades as well. He began tossing them down into the Tang-e-Kuffâr, flushing some of the refugees from hiding. Some of the Mohâjerân decided to chance a break, and Jân Muhammad picked them off in their panic. He had been trained to use cyber-linked guns, not conventional infantry weapons; but now the refugees were learning how badly they'd underestimated him. When the sun first edged over the broad, parched plain, he had accounted for half the Mohâjerân in the party. As the morning stretched on, he got a few more as they attempted to rush by him, and the rest when they withdrew up the winding, unprotected path. He stood up at last, his neck muscles aching and stiff. He hadn't given up, although the refugees had taken away his advantage. Even if the Mohâjerân tried storming his bunker again, he wasn't afraid. Without the cyber weapons, he was still confident that he could keep them from overrunning his position. He wondered what Sergeant Abadani would say when he heard that Jân Muhammad, using antique guns and toy rifles, had beaten a unit of Mohâjerân.

Hours later, while he was frying some flour in lard and chewing on a greasy stick of dried mutton, Rostam's voice called to him from the bottom of the hill. The old man sounded frightened. That made Jân Muhammad laugh, but it was a somber and dangerous laugh. Jân Muhammad was curious if Rostam had been sent to try another scheme of some kind. The old man was a fool and Jân Muhammad might have been amused, except he understood clearly that if Rostam had been successful, Jân Muhammad might well be dead now.

"Ya sarbaaz!" Rostam's voice quavered in the hot, still air. "Ya sarbaaz, we must talk."

Jân Muhammad kept scraping the browning flour in the pan. He added another spoonful of lard and watched it melt. "Rostam?" he called.

"We must talk!" The spy was terrified.

"Why do you say that? What do we have to talk about?"

"Don't act that way, aga. Please let me explain. Let me come up."

"Explain if you want to, but do it from out there. This bunker stinks enough as it is."

"I can't just stand here and shout at you, aga."

"Why the hell not?"

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There was a pause. Jân Muhammad glanced out and saw Rostam shifting nervously from one foot to the other. He held his large stick, but the mule was nowhere to be seen. "Listen, O worthy one: it is true that I did as the Mohâjerân ordered, but I was forced to do it. They threatened me. I'm many times a grandfather, I'm all used up. I can't stand up to strong young men when they force their way into my home."

"They gave you something to put into my data deck?"

"Yes, aga."

Jân Muhammad muttered a curse. "Did you think you were helping me, when you did what they told you?"

Another pause. "No, aga, but I had no choice! The shopkeeper in the village, he was with them, and he said that I'd die slowly in front of everyone if I did not co-operate. He said that he'd never sell me another loaf of bread, another bottle of wine for solace in my old age."

"But you never thought to warn me. You were more afraid of this shopkeeper and the refugees than all of the Mahdi's army. You are *worse* than the Mohâjerân; you have refused the service of the blessed Mahdi. You think only of your worthless belly, when you were given an opportunity to benefit the deputy of Allah."

"I was afraid, aga!"

Jân Muhammad spat in disgust. "You've made that very clear, old man. You threw in your lot with the Mohâjerân, so now you'll have to ask for protection from them. I wish you luck."

"But, sarbaaz, the entire village . . . when they heard, they drove me out, into the desert—"

"And what do you want from me? Sympathy?"

Rostam began to weep. "I can't live without food, without water. Where will I go?"

Jân Muhammad had stopped paying attention. He tapped a few keys on the data deck.

Do you wish to fire submachine guns?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no

Jân Muhammad typed 1.

"Sarbaaz! *Help* me! I beg you, as one servant of Allah to another!"

"You submit when it serves your purpose," shouted the soldier. "And when it doesn't serve your purpose, you break every law of the Prophet, may blessings be upon his name and peace."

Do you wish continuous fire?
Type 1 = yes, 0 = no

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Jân Muhammad typed 1.

"Pity me!" Rostam was hysterical. He had fallen to his knees in the stony soil, and now he raised his arms in supplication. "Think of your own father. Would you treat *him* this way?"

"My own father would not have left me weak and vulnerable to my enemies, and he wouldn't have taken sides with the haters of Allah."

To commence firing on your mark, type 1

"Bismillah!" screamed Rostam. He fell forward, laying his forehead in the dust, trembling with terror.

Jân Muhammad's finger descended over the keys, hesitated, then hung motionless in the air. He could not bring himself to murder this wretched old man. "Go!" he called. "Get off my hill! Go starve to death in the wilderness! Walk to Jerusalem and ask the forgiveness of the Mahdi!"

"Whoever forgives and amends, he shall have his just reward from Allah," quoted Rostam. He staggered off, away from the young man he had betrayed, away from the village that had turned him out.

Jân Muhammad closed his eyes tightly, wondering at his sudden change of heart. "In the profane mouth of an unbeliever," he murmured, "even the words of the Prophet can lose their beauty." Behind him, unheeded, his poor midday meal burned and was ruined. With his augmented vision, Jân Muhammad watched the old man until he was out of sight, swallowed up by the seared and withered expanse of waste. ●

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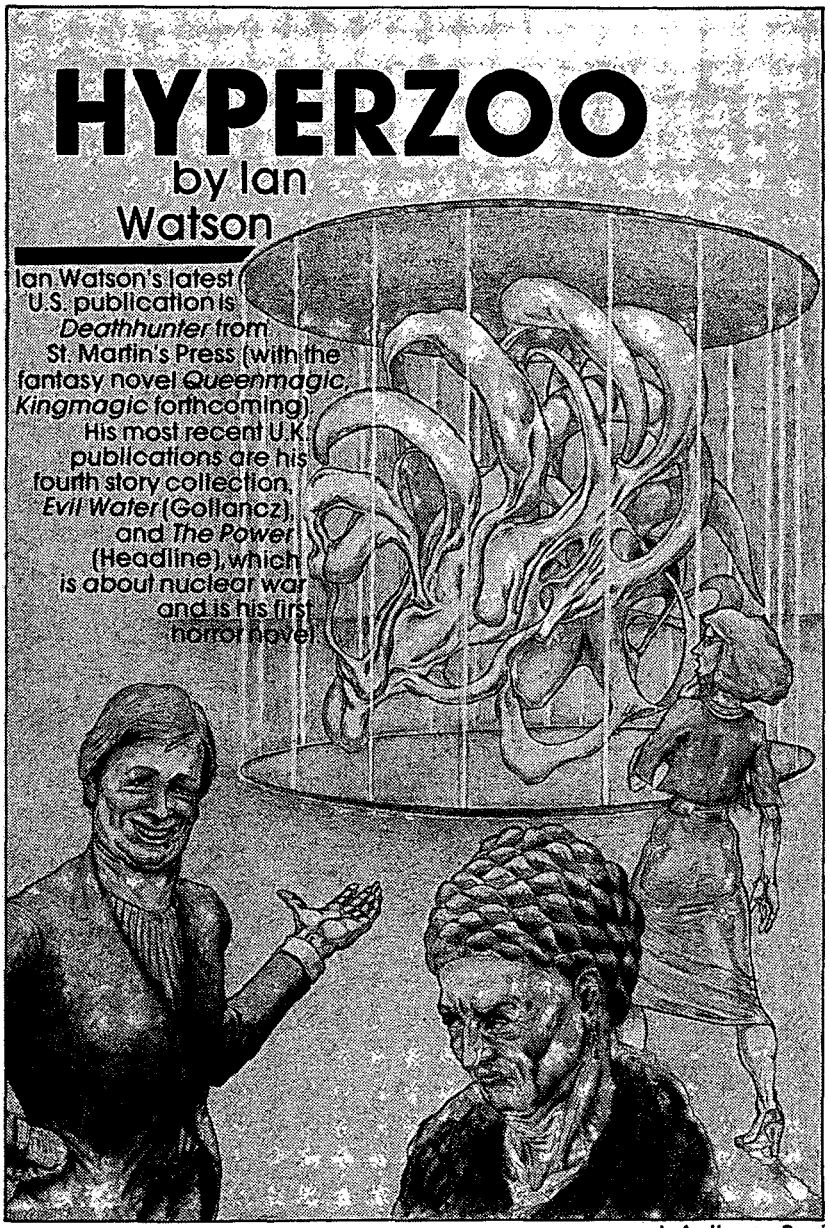
HYPERZOO

by Ian Watson

Ian Watson's latest U.S. publication is *Deathhunter* from St. Martin's Press (with the fantasy novel *Queenmagic, Kingmagic* forthcoming). His most recent U.K. publications are his fourth story collection, *Evil Water* (Gollancz), and *The Power* (Headline), which is about nuclear war and is his first horror novel.



art: Anthony Bari

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"And this," said Zoo Director Riggers, "is a hypertiger. We call it a tiger by analogy with three-dimensional creatures. It's a fierce carnivore. We believe its habits are solitary. It's the tiger of the four-dimensional world."

"Doesn't look much like a tiger to me," drawled Mrs. Tarkington-Svensen, whose late husband's foundation had funded this new wing of the zoo. "In fact it looks like nothing so much as a jumble of gooey orange tubes. Like some stupid bit of modern sculpture."

Harry Svensen's tax-write-off bounty had also endowed the Museum of Contemporary Conceptual Sculpture. Unfortunately the perceptive Mr. Svensen had died of a heart attack just the month before, leaving control of the bulk of his fortune to his recently acquired fifth wife, Adelle Tarkington, about whom he had not nearly been as perceptive. Except externally; she'd been a beauty queen, not recently to be sure, but not in olden days either. She was still a golden-blonde, tanned, and well-tended memorial to former glories.

"At least it's orange, Adelle," pointed out Sonya Svensen, teenage daughter of Harry's third marriage who had exercised her child-charter rights by electing to stay on with him through his fourth marriage to an ex-geisha Japanese lady conservationist and designer of avant-garde topological netsuke.

"Tigers are orange, sort of," said Sonya.

"I," proclaimed Mrs. T-S, "smell a rat."

Actually there was no smell to speak of in this particular animal house apart from a crackle of ozone produced by the glow-bars of the enormous cages. Did Mrs. T-S imagine that Riggers was mounting some equally enormous lucrative hoax and had in fact borrowed some mobile pneumatic conceptual art to stick in these beast pens?

"I do not believe these objects are animals from this fanciful Fourworld the university domeheads say they have dreamed up." (She wasn't very respectful about scientists.) "I think this thing is hollow. Yes, hollow, that's it."

"Hollow?" Riggers looked puzzled. "Obviously there'll be a certain amount of hollowness, else how could the hypertiger eat and excrete?"

Mrs. T-S wrinkled her nose disapprovingly at his mention of excretion. She considered herself a fine lady, and high society tended to agree.

"Analogically, that's to say," Riggers hastened to add. "I mean, no 3-D animal is solid all the way through."

"Are you deliberately misunderstanding me, Dr. Riggers? Are you trying to make a fool of me?"

"Adelle means it's a holo-*graph*," whispered Sonya. "I think."

Nothing wrong with Mrs. T-S's hearing. "That's what I said: a hollow."

"If she could, well, poke a stick through the bars and, er, nudge it,

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she'd know it was for real." Sonya hesitated. "Or would she need to use a 4-D stick to make any impact?"

"You oughtn't to poke sticks through the bars," I said. "Who knows but the hyperfield could short out, and then we'd lose our specimen?"

"Oh I hardly think so," Riggers said hastily to me. "And a security guard isn't exactly qualified to pronounce!"

I *had* taken a quickie course about the Fourworld at the university, but in fact Riggers was right. The subject was still pretty much a mystery to me. Indeed, until the could-be never-never-time when the aforesaid domeheads should discover a method to four-dimensionalize a human being and translate the bold volunteer into the Fourworld, I supposed that domain must remain, of its very essence, a total mystery to almost everyone.

I wondered whether the Profs and Ph.D.s had merely been babbling when they hinted at inserting a person into the Fourworld? What a voyage of exploration, what a safari that would be—through a hyper-landscape where hyperbeasts roamed! The most suitable candidate for explorer might well be a raving nut-case, a certified lunatic whose rapport with our own Threeworld was already totally out of synch.

"In any case nobody should poke captive animals with sticks," said Sonya, changing her tune. "That's medieval, like bear-baiting." She was trying to be helpful, to ensure that her Daddy's pet projects were carried on.

"Quite," agreed Riggers. He sounded relieved. Plainly he was under a strain. Not inconceivably Mrs. T-S could lean on Harry's foundation to withdraw its support. Rumor had it that her lawyers had found some loophole. The hyperfields soaked up a hell of a lot of costly energy, never mind all the other maintenance costs. It was no secret that Mrs T-S nursed a passionate whim to fund the sending of handsome young astronauts, beholden to her, out to the unexplored frontiers of Threespace. Since spaceflight was all Earth-orbit, battle station stuff, those frontiers weren't too far away. If NASA was to be revived, it would take a private sponsor. Mrs. T-S was positive there was life on Mars and Venus and the moons of Jupiter, and couldn't understand why there shouldn't be any four-armed barbarian warriors and green-skinned princesses. She could see herself at a society ball arm in arm with her own doughty spacefaring heroes.

Even I could see that the Fourworld was more exciting— potentially —than Threespace, which simply spread out and out for zillions of miles full of vacuum, bits of rock, and balls of gas.

Potentially. The trouble was that the hyperanimals which the zoo had trapped, whilst utterly weird, didn't exactly turn the populace on as more than a seven-day wonder. How could they, when by definition you

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couldn't see more than a bitty part of any of them? Visiting this section of the zoo wasn't as grabbing an experience as goggling at the last few rhino alive in captivity (and alive nowhere else—score a point for pathos). But equally, if our Threeworld's livestock was diving helter-skelter down the drain in the great man-made mass extinction, undoubtedly the ecology of the Fourworld was still bursting at the seams by comparison. So far we had only netted a tiny sample, by no means enough to start talking confidently in terms of species and family trees and 4-D evolution; though Dr. Riggers sometimes pretended so for public relations purposes. This had to be the zoo of the future—if only we could get a better idea of the beasts. At the moment, and perhaps forever, visiting here was like trying to admire some giant Renaissance canvas by peeping through a keyhole which only showed you inches at a time. (Cancel Renaissance. A giant abstract canvas. Jackson Pollock or some such.)

Just then the mass of orange tubes inside the cage began to twitch and pulse, and expand and shift.

"See, it's woken up," said Riggers with forced cheerfulness. "It was resting before. Now it's active."

"How convenient." Mrs T-S sniffed disdainfully, her own vision no doubt locked on a valiant cadet in space armor, bulging muscles of brass, blasting an attacking Jovian crystal-lizard to smithereens.

"I'm sure these supposed creatures can't possibly be pulled here from Mars," she went on. "Mars can't possess creatures like this. It must have, well—"

"Thoats and Zitidars," supplied Sonya. "*No*, Adelle, Burroughs made those up."

"Or if they are from Mars, the process warps them out of all recognition. Only lets poor bits of them squeeze through. That's why we should explore Mars the proper way. By rocket."

Riggers looked perplexed. "Mars, dear lady?"

"Yes, Mars. Mars is the fourth world. Every child knows that. Earth is the third world."

"Ah . . . Perhaps a slight case of cross purposes here? When we speak about the Threeworld and the Fourworld we're referring in the first case to the world of three dimensions which we inhabit: namely length and breadth and height. 'Fourworld' doesn't refer to the fourth planet. Mars is just another threeworld, part of the threeworld universe."

"*Just* another?"

"A very special and exciting planet, to be sure! But even so. The Fourworld has an extra dimension, diagonal to those other three we know and love."

"It's like this, Adelle." Sonya waggled her fingers, trying to stick them all out at right angles to each other, but quickly gave up.

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Since everyone else was giving lessons to Mrs. T-S, and Riggers now looked distraught, I decided to join in.

I pointed to the nearest glow-bar. "The hyperfield casts a four-dimensional net into the Fourworld, Mrs. Tarkington-Svensen. It snares a fourbeast and pins it down for us, so it can't escape from the cage, though of course the fourbeast isn't all here."

"Are *you*?" she enquired. "Are you all here?"

I laughed politely at her wit. "Most of the fourbeast is still in the Fourworld, which is how it can feed itself, since we can't provide any fourfood and threefood would be no use. That would be like us trying to eat a picture of a meal on a magazine page."

"Why, that's cruel! The poor things could starve!"

All this while, the hypertiger had been expanding and changing configuration. By now it was the size of a real Bengal tiger—apart from the fact that real Bengal tigers went extinct a couple of years previous—and it resembled a spherical rug armed with teeth or claws. This started to roll back and forth, "pacing" the cage. A long pink tentacle or tube appeared near the ball and presently joined up with it. An intestine? What might have been a fourleg put in an appearance, then changed its mind.

It was, of course, hard to be sure of the exact anatomy of a hyperbeast even when you'd seen and filmed all sorts of aspects of it. You couldn't simply stick all your pictures together or even digitize them and feed them into a computer, and bingo. A hypertiger wasn't merely lots more tiger superimposed upon tiger. Like a stack of film transparencies shot from different angles. The beast would have its own unique four-anatomy, evolved by the struggle to survive and breed amidst a whole hyperecology. However, we had once seen what we decided were aspects of its fourjaws, chewing hyperprey to pieces, and another time we had witnessed part of its fourface and foureyes, burning bright. "Tiger" seemed to fit the bill. Approximately. Analogically.

"I mean to say," continued Mrs. T-S, "it's stuck in a trap."

"Ah, but only 3-D slices of it are hampered. It can still hunt in the Fourworld," I assured her. "The geometry's different there. More complicated than here."

Riggers had revived. "Thank you, Jake," he said to me. He turned quickly to Mrs. T-S. "Naturally, we have observed hypercreatures impinging on our own world in the past. At the time we didn't realize what they were. If people glimpse a meaningless shape their brains tend to impose a plausible pattern, to make sense of what they're seeing. All those tales of mythical creatures, dragons, monsters, demons, and UFO phenomena immediately make sense when we realize that people were witnessing an aspect of a hyperanimal intersecting with our own Three-

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world as it went about its 4-D business. A UFO would be a hyperbird, or whatever. And now we can genuinely cage this fantastic menagerie! Isn't it wonderful? To be able to see with our own eyes the actual source of basilisks and behemoths, minotaurs and griffins, flying saucers and Bigfeet and abominable snowmen, angels and devils! Isn't that more wonderful than . . ."

Than Jovian crystal-lizards. Than Thoats and Zitidars. But he tailed off, wary of pulling any rugs out too brusquely from under Mrs. T-S's cherished and fanciful dreams. He gestured grandly down the air-conditioned hall paid for by Harry, and which was large enough to house a modest spacefleet under construction, destination Jupiter.

"Let's move along and see what we call a hyperpig, shall we?" He chuckled awkwardly. "Can't have all our cages full of tigers! Big fierce animals are rare, eh?"

It was a fair walk to the next cage. We had to position hyperfields a safe distance apart, which accounted for the great size of the hall. This was a further disincentive to streams of eager visitors, once the first honeymoon rapture was over. Most people like to flip quickly from channel to channel as regards experiences.

While we were walking, Sonya said, "Dr. Riggers? Were angels and abominable snowmen some sort of hyperape? So will there be hyperpeople in the Fourworld too? I mean, we have animals in our own world but we got people as well. Might we see bits of fourpeople as ghosts—appearing then vanishing?"

"I'm *inclined* to doubt that, Miz Svensen." Riggers did his best not to sound patronizing. "You see, the complexities of Fourspace must be such that I doubt you'd get any sort of gratuitous free-ranging speculative intelligence having a look-in evolutionarily. The fourbrain must be pretty fully occupied simply processing the, uh, complexities. Anyway, in our own case the evolution of intelligence was such a set of long-shot random chances that I doubt you'd get any repetition of the process. The odds are way against. Did you know that the eye evolved as an organ independently forty times—but intelligence only evolved *once*? Once! So: hypercreatures, sure. But not hyperhumans. Your ghosts and whatnot are glimpses of hyperbeasts which our minds try to rationalize. Except now we can pin 'em down. Here's our Fourpig."

I guess the ugliest type of pig hitherto known to the human race had got to be the Vietnamese black pig, of which two gross specimens lolled elsewhere in the zoo. However, this 3-D slice of 4-D bacon had the Vietnamese b.p. left at the starting line. Today it was a wallowing cluster of greasy grey hairy sacs. Embedded in the mess was what might have been a giant fly's compound eye, squinting out. Oink.

"Isn't there anything *beautiful* in your zoo?" complained Mrs. T-S.

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"Ah well, yes . . . we have what I call the hyperpeacock yonder. Let's go see if it's displaying, hmm?"

Riggers hustled her away diplomatically from the four-oink.

"Er, but Doctor," persisted Sonya, "if you get fourpigs paralleling threepigs, and so on, why can't you have fourpeople paralleling threepeople?"

"Because those names are just analogies. We don't know enough yet. We need the funding to be able to *four-D* a person to go and take a look. If that's possible. Most things are possible with big enough funding. And then just imagine the possibilities! When the first atom was split people thought it could have no practical applications. Were they wrong! Well hell—if you'll pardon my French, Mrs. Tarkington-Svensen—we already have the core of a 4-D zoo. Maybe in the Four-universe it's easier to travel from planet to planet. Maybe a fourperson in a fourrocket could reach Mars or Jupiter much faster and easier. I mean, the analogies of Mars and Jupiter, so long as those exist. Then you'd switch off the hyperfield, become 3-D again, and land. Never mind Jupiter, we might get to the stars. It all depends on the topology of fourspace, if you'll forgive my being technical—the way it's connected together. Oh yes," he rhapsodized, "I can see hypernauts one day. Hyperastronauts."

"Ah," said Mrs. T-S. "Ah!"

"With enough funding."

The hyperpeacock was a fluttering, waxing and waning mandala of shades of blue. Cobalt, ultramarine, robin's egg, and electric blue. Some streaks of violet, almost ultraviolet. "Eyes" of green. You could easily see how someone spotting that in our sky could think they were watching a UFO.

Whether Mrs. T-S's exclamation of delight related to the visible segment of fourbird, or to the prospect of hyperastronauts stepping out on to one of the larger moons of Jupiter, I never determined. At that moment Sonya—who had been lagging—screamed shrilly.

My gun was in my hand a moment later, though I didn't yet thumb the safety off.

Sonya was staring back at the fourpig pen. Something very large was hovering over the topmost glow-bars, something analogous to a free-floating furry octopus equipped with fat stubby tentacles. Or vaguely analogous to a hairy hand. Which was pulling at the glow-bars, bending them outward, opening a rather large gap.

A second monstrous hyperhand—or aspect thereof—was drifting towards us.

"Something's escaped!" shrilled Mrs. T-S. "Shoot at it! Protect me."

"I don't have fourbullets," I told her.

"I don't care how many you have! Why didn't you load your gun up

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properly? You don't have to shoot at each finger." Oh, so she too could see the analogy.

"Let's just *run*!" cried Sonya. Suiting her actions to her words, she scampered away towards the distant exit. "Come *on*, Adelle!" she called back.

Surely nothing had escaped; though the fourpig lookled likely to, soon. In which case something had *arrived*—to open our cages.

"Discretion is the better part of—" said Riggers. He caught Mrs. T-S's arm and began urging her along as fast as he could. I paced fast alongside, keeping an eye on the hyperhand behind us; but this seemed to be shrinking, thank goodness.

Oh well, we reached the exit and got out into the ordinary part of the zoo. More modest animal houses, compounds, restaurant, popcorn stall, cityscape beyond with office blocks, university hill to our right. Parties of visiting schoolkids—and ourselves a moment later—were all staring at the shape that bestrode the city.

How to describe it? Can't. There's no good analogy.

I guess in the Fourworld intelligence indeed developed, but in a different class of creatures: more like walking hairy squids, with ever-branching tentacles and frogspawn eyes—though *that* was only an aspect.

Maybe more important: a 4-D world is a hell of a lot larger than a 3-D world. It packs in a whole lot more, and if you could sort of *unfold* it alongside ours—which you can't—it would occupy a far vaster amount of space. The scale's different, quite different.

So the big boys of the Fourworld are noticeably bigger than any human being. Or rhino. Or whale.

What Riggers had in his zoo, I realized, wasn't hypertigers and hyperpigs. The captive creatures had to be bits of, well, 4-D shrews or dormice or dinky little hummingbirds. Nature's miniatures. Maybe as humble as bugs.

Compared to the masters of the Fourworld, us Threepeople led a very superficial life. To a 4-D eye we were flat and paper-thin. But more than that, we were also pretty tiny. Easy to miss noticing. Until we built ourselves a hyperfield, on which the Fourthings could at last stub a toe. Until we made a 4-D intrusion which stuck out like a sore thumb.

Shortly after, the ripping began. The city kind of screeched like parcel tape being torn free. I don't mean that the world bent up in the air or that buildings toppled or anything. Everything stayed put. Yet at the same time it was being . . . parted from the rest of 3-D country, shifted, moved over somewhere else.

* * *

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These days there's a blank at the city limits. And nothing beyond. Absolutely nothing.

Up in the sunless, though bright, sky there are large things like clouds of frogspawn that seem to look at us.

The power's off, so we can't play any more hypergames, and provisioning the population is going to be a swine before long. We're still feeding the normal zoo animals, but we'll have to kill them and eat them all, even if we do have the last rhinos in existence. That should spin out food stocks for about one extra day. Come to the great zoo barbecue! Hippoburger. Loin of lion. Parrot kebabs. Buckets of blood to make sausages.

As if we didn't have enough problems, the 4-D mob play games with our Threeworld, stretching bits of it out so that a hundred yard walk takes an hour, interposing barriers in our way, and making loose scenery and people disappear then putting them back into the Threeworld somewhere else, as often as not in mirror image so that a truck will suddenly have its steering wheel on the right and a mole on your right cheek will now be on your left cheek. Seeing what'll happen. How it'll affect us. Stirring the ants' nest up a little.

Though to my own senses I'm solid and three-dimensional the same as everything else around, I can't help feeling convinced that I'm flat—and that other people are flat, and the whole of the city is flat. I feel that I'm part of a photograph. It's an action-photograph, as it were; a living photograph. People can move around, climb stairs, enter rooms; no problem. But the photo has edges beyond which no one can stray. And compared with whatever 4-D intelligence is examining this photograph, I'm just a flat picture.

If we're flat, how do we go inside a building? How does our frogspawn spy us inside a room? Well, our inside and our outside don't make a scrap of difference to the masters of the Fourworld. It's all the same flat surface to them. Er, by analogy. Always by analogy.

I've been snatched and reversed left to right and put back in a different place once already. This happens without

any warning

a sudden dizzying rush, though it seems to last longer this time

taking me to

the brown bear compound. Oops, I'm inside it. Grass and bushes and fun-logs, a dirty pool, and the tall wall sloping inward so that no Bruin can claw its way up and out.

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Maybe they think people with clothes on look pretty much like bears, especially when the three bears are up on their hind legs like now, sniffing the air and squinting at me.

Up on their hind legs, before dropping back on all fours to lumber towards me.

What happens if you put a spider in an ant's nest, or stick an ant in a spider's web? Hey, let's see.

Good thing I'm an armed security guard. Bad thing for the bears. No choice, really. We would have had to shoot them soon.

Out with the gun, off with the safety.

Click.

Click.

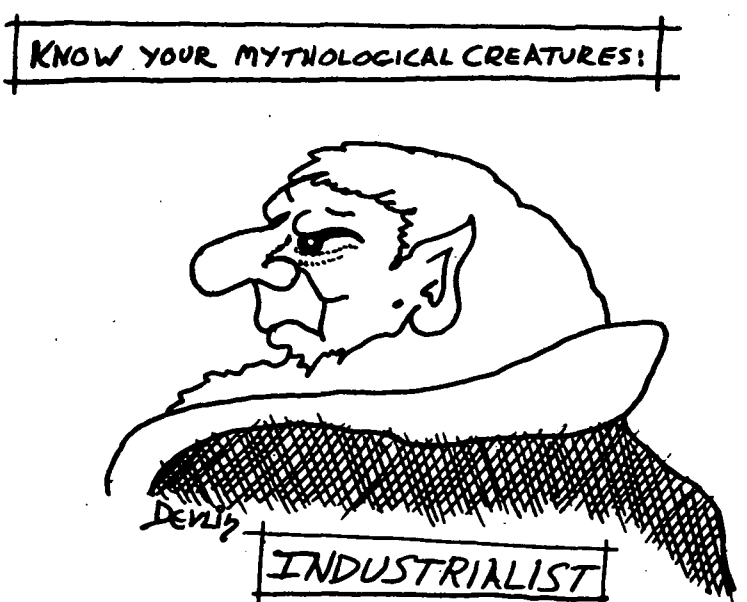
Click.

Oh my God, something has taken the cartridges from inside of the clip. A 4-D creature can reach inside a shut-up room, a locked box, with no bother at all. Or reach inside a gun and empty it. Bit fiddly on this scale, but they must have used some tiny 4-D tools. Or grown extra tiny branch-tentacles. Micro-fingers. No bother.

Click.

"Help me!"

There's a clump of frogspawn overhead, watching. ●



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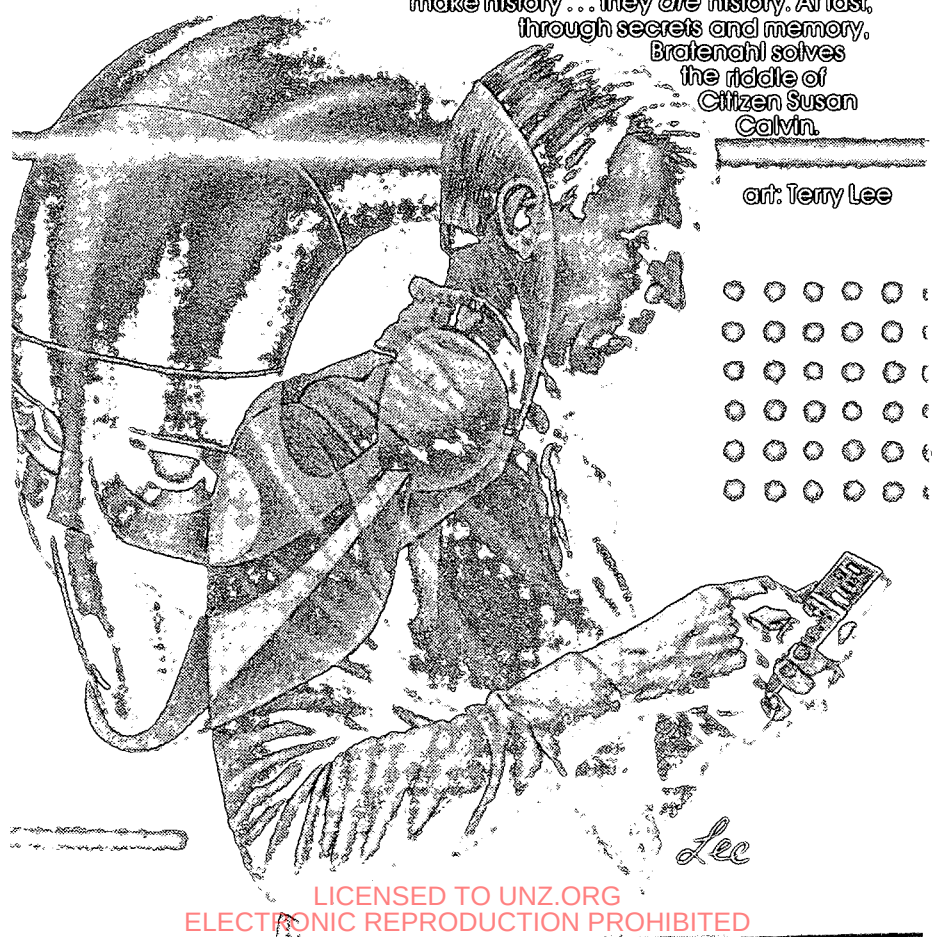
(Conclusion)

I, ROBOT: THE MOVIE

by Harlan Ellison

Unaware of our power, each of us contains all the past and all the future of the human race. But some rare few, knowing, don't merely make history . . . they *are* history. At last, through secrets and memory, Bratenahl solves the riddle of Citizen Susan Calvin.

art: Terry Lee



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(SYNOPSIS OF PARTS ONE AND TWO)

It is 2076. **Robert Bratenahl,** *reporting for* Cosmos *Magazine at the funeral on Aldebaran-C XII of* **Stephen Byerley,** *First President of the Galactic Federation, recognizes* **Susan Calvin** *among the graveside mourners. Susan, eighty-two, retired chief robopsychologist of U.S. Robots and Mechanical Men/U.S. RoboMek, has not been seen for more than twenty years; a long-standing rumor has it that she and Byerley were lovers.*

Bratenahl's boss, Cosmos *editor* **Rowe,** *instructs him to interview Susan, at all costs. Bratenahl protests: invading Susan's personal space could cost him his teleport-booth matrix: Will* Cosmos *back him? "All the way," Rowe assures him.*

Susan, backed by a pair of polite but menacing chaperons, rebuffs the interview and vanishes into a teleport booth for no one knows where. Bratenahl teleports to Sigma Draconis 5 and **Bernice Jolo,** *a surgeon with whom he has had an ongoing affair. Bernice's father once operated on Susan Calvin. While there, Bratenahl reviews a memoir cassette recorded in 2034 on his deathbed by* **Alfred Lanning,** *First Director of U.S. Robot Corporation, which tells the story of "Robbie."*

Robot playmate to six-year-old Susan Calvin, **Robbie** *is returned to the U.S. Robots factory at the insistence of* **Belinda Calvin,** *Susan's stepmother. It is 2000, the time of the robot pogroms inspired by the Reverend* **Malachi Soldash** *and his Church of the Mortal Flesh; and Belinda Calvin, already golemophobic, gives Susan's father,* **Edward Calvin,** *the choice of saving his marriage or keeping the robot. Susan is, of course, as distraught as only a six-year-old can be. To prove to her that Robbie is not a person but a thing, Belinda and Edward take Susan to the U.S. Robots factory where Susan, seeing her dear playmate working among other robots, rushes down to the assembly line and into the path of a massive robot body hanging from an overhead conveyor belt; Robbie saves Susan, but is later destroyed by a crazed mob during the height of the pogroms. To placate the Church and the Unions (who see robots as taking away human jobs), robots are banned from Earth.*

Deducing Susan Calvin's general whereabouts from remarks Bernice made regarding her father, Bratenahl teleports to Brazil, Old Earth, where he finds **Simon Haskell,** *straw-boss to a colony of construction* marabunta *(ecitons; army ants) in the Mato Grosso jungle. Bribing the ants with a jar of chocolate syrup and Simon with a first issue of* Whiz Comics *featuring Captain Marvel, Bratenahl learns that Susan has her own city/home built beneath the ruins of the lost city of* Xingú Xavante; *Simon leads Bratenahl to a ventilation shaft found by the ants.*

Bratenahl sneaks into the city only to be caught by Susan's guards. Escaping them, he finds himself in a gigantic underground museum, and then face to face with Susan Calvin. Startled, Susan drops the priceless ancient jar she is cleaning and it shatters into a billion pieces. Leave me alone, Susan tells Bratenahl, adding, "The laws of invasion of personal space were created specifically for people like you." The guards come up behind him; Bratenahl bolts and is shot by a stun-gun.

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Back in the Cosmos *offices, Bratenahl comes to. Rowe, his editor, is furious. Susan Calvin is suing* Cosmos *for invasion of her personal space, so not only is Bratenahl off the story, he's fired. Plus, the Jurisprudence League on Capella has pulled his matrix: Bratenahl is grounded for the rest of his life.*

*"You sonofabitch!" cries Bratenahl. "*You're *the one shoved me* into *this! You said you'd back me!" Try and prove it, Rowe says with a nasty grin. Enraged, Bratenahl slams his fist into Rowe's face, and the editor thumps into the wall, slips, sits down half-conscious. Bratenahl is standing over him, fists balled, waiting. Finally Rowe pulls himself up, face swollen, eye closing, and says:*

"Get outta here. You're dead in the water, son."

Then Rowe turns away and Bratenahl, helpless, frustrated, goes home. Still he is obsessed by the story as he reviews tapes of Edward Calvin, Susan Calvin, Stephen Byerley, Alfred Lanning, news cuts of the Robot Pogroms. . . . And then Rowe is at the door. Bratenahl reluctantly lets him in. Rowe explains that it was all for show, he wanted word to get out that Bratenahl was off the project: now Bratenahl can do some real *digging. This will be the greatest scoop in decades! He gives Bratenahl a surrogate matrix and new booth coordinates.*

On Kitalpha XVI, a world of murderous lightning storms, Bratenahl is met by **Frinkel,** *a rusted, antiquated robot that takes Bratenahl to a battered, obsolescent FTL spaceship and its occupants,* **Michael Donovan** *and* **Gregory Powell,** *a couple of antiques themselves, former trouble-shooters for Susan Calvin who now seed new worlds with teleport booths.*

Donovan and Powell remember the first time they worked with Susan Calvin. They tell the story of "Runaround." In 2022, these three humans and an experimental robot named **Speedy** *were the Second Mercury Mining Expedition.* This *Mercury never revolves; Lightside temperatures reach 460° Kelvin/368° Fahrenheit. What stops the station there from melting is an electrostatic field powered by photocell banks . . . which begin to fail. Powell sends Speedy out for a kilo of selenium needed to repair the photocells—pools of selenium exist all over Mercury's Sunside—and Speedy flips out and never comes back. While slowly roasting to death the three humans figure out what happened: volatile gases and conflicting emphases of the Three Laws of Robotics keep Speedy unable to complete his mission or return to the station . . . until Susan puts herself in mortal danger and Speedy regains sanity when the First Law overrides everything else. But it is Susan Calvin who saves their lives, not Donovan or Powell.*

Powell and Donovan also mention a vague rumor they'd heard of a romance Susan Calvin once had, so Bratenahl returns to Sigma Draconis 5 and the underground **Cryonic Crypts,** *where he interviews the frozen* **Norman Bogert,** *head mathematician of U.S. Robots who succeeded Lanninig as RoboMek's CEO. Bogert has cancer of the lymph glands and has been frozen for twenty-two years. . . .*

No, says Bogert from his deepsleep, Susan Calvin did not have an affair with Byerley; robots *were her passion, except once . . . and his name was*

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Milton Ashe. *Bogert tells the story of "Liar!" It is 2028, Ashe is the youngest officer of the corporation, and the thirty-fourth robot in the new RB series can read minds:* **Herbie.** *Susan has fallen in love with Ashe, but her miserable self-image tells her she's too spinsterly for Ashe to return that love and she dare not express it. Herbie, knowing her thoughts, assures her that he's read Ashe's mind and Ashe* does *love her. However, Herbie also told Bogert that not only was Bogert's math better than Lanning's but that Lanning had already retired and named Bogert as his successor. But Herbie is only following First Law ("A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm"); by telling Susan and Bogert what they* want *to hear, Herbie believes he is sparing them the "harm" of mental pain. Things come to a head when Lanning tells Bogert that Herbie said Lanning's was the better math; nonsense, says Bogert, and anyway Herbie said you're retiring; I said no such thing, responds Lanning.*

Meanwhile, Susan learns that Ashe is marrying someone else; in shock she stumbles back to Herbie, mumbling: "Tell me it's a bad dream. . . ." And Herbie tells her it is *all a dream. Suddenly Susan snaps out of it, realizing that in his pathetic attempt to follow First Law Herbie is inadvertantly trying to send her into schizophrenia. Then Bogert and Lanning burst in, each demanding Herbie contradict the other—and at last Susan catches on. She also understands that Herbie knows what went wrong in his assembly that made him telepathic, and in ordering him to give that information she sets up the conflict in the First Law: Herbie can't tell without hurting Lanning and Bogert (neither of them wants to admit that a machine can do what they themselves couldn't), but by withholding the information he hurts them by not telling them what they* ask *to hear, and around and around it goes until Herbie lets loose with an agonizing scream and pitches forward, hopelessly insane. When the others depart, Susan, heartbroken and, as always, alone, kicks Herbie in the head and says bitterly: "Liar!"*

In present time, back in Bernice's conapt, Bratenhal, now utterly obsessed by Susan Calvin and her relationship to the First President of the Galactic Federation, replays tapes of Byerley throughout his career, over and over on the wallscreen. Endlessly. No good. Seeking a clue, finding no linchpins. Bernice comes in to say goodnight; Bratenahl says he'll be along in a little while. And the hours pass by as he runs the tapes. Then he wakes Bernice: he found it! The two of them view tapes of Byerley made thirteen years apart, but Bernice doesn't see it. Bratenahl runs tapes of Bernice made five years apart, and there it is, the difference: the aging. Then Byerley again, closeups side by side: a thirteen-year gap doing the most demanding job the world has ever known; and there is no difference. *Byerley hasn't aged, Byerley hasn't changed. Knocked out with joy, Bratenahl grabs Bernice, swings her around and cries:*

"The sonofabitch was immortal!"

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216 CONTINUED: – 4

He swings her and kisses her and we

CUT TO:

217 SAME AS 213 – FULL ON HOLOGRAPHIC CHAMBER

The living area of Bernice's conapt. Not much later. Bratenahl stands in front of a section of Bernice's living room wall that has slid back to reveal a semicircular holographic reception chamber. He holds a small device on which he is punching out coordinates for transmission. They emit soft musical tones. The chamber fills with a milky mist shot through with scintillations. Then there is a shape faintly discernible that takes full form (though we can see through it and we know it's a projection). It is the robot, Frinkel. It looks out at Bratenahl.

FRINKEL
Mr. Bratenahl. Very good to see you again, sir. Are you coming back to visit?

BRATENAHL
Hello, Frinkel.
(beat)
No, I'm not coming back . . . but I need their help.

FRINKEL
Dr. Calvin?

BRATENAHL
Yes. I have to talk to them.

The robot looks around behind itself, as if checking to make sure it's alone. We cannot see much of the b.g. but only vague shadowy intimations of the saloon of the old buckety spaceship we saw in Scene 141.

FRINKEL
They've discussed it quite a lot, sir. They don't agree . . . about getting involved.

BRATENAHL
(urgently)
Frinkel . . . listen . . . I've stumbled on what I think is something very very important. I need to get a message to Susan Calvin personally.

(CONTINUED:)

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217 CONTINUED:

He has walked right up to the hologram now. At times, as he speaks, he walks *through* the image.

FRINKEL
Your friend can't get it to her?

BRATENAHL
Calvin hasn't responded to Dr. Jolo's request. I think she may not have actually received the message.
(beat)
But she'd certainly talk to Donovan and Powell. For old times' sake.
(beat)
It's just eleven words. They can get eleven words to her, can't they . . . ?
(beat)
Please, Frinkel . . . let me ask them.

The robot fades out of the pickup area for a moment, as if checking to make sure there's no one around to overhear.

FRINKEL
They're resting right now, Mr. Bratenahl. Central sent through the parts for a new booth . . .
(beat)
There's a big jump coming up.
(beat)
Would you trust me to speak to them, sir?

BRATENAHL
Yes, of course. Thank you, Frinkel.

FRINKEL
What are the eleven words?

BRATENAHL
(using hand-device)
Here . . . I'm punching in the transmission coordinates for Susan Calvin's receiver. But they have to speak to *her*, not to her guards. Just have them say to her: *Stephen Byerley was immortal. Now will you talk to me*? And the eleventh word is my name.

(CONTINUED:)

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217 CONTINUED: – 2

FRINKEL
(slowly)
That's rather startling, sir.
(beat)
I'll speak to them.

BRATENAHL
Thanks, Frinkel. I'll be waiting right here.

The robot hologram fades back to mist, and the chamber is empty. Bratenahl clicks off the hand-device and as CAMERA MOVES INTO empty chamber, into mist and emptiness, we

DISSOLVE TO:

218 INT. BERNICE'S CONAPT – ANOTHER ANGLE ON POOL

Sometime later. Shadowplay across the walls. Bratenahl and Bernice are in the pool. Soft alien music wafts through the room. They lie there, speaking softly as CAMERA COMES DOWN.

BERNICE
You haven't been chasing this story because you want to find out if she was Byerley's mistress, have you?

BRATENAHL
No; at least not after the first.

BERNICE
And it's not obsession, is it?

BRATENAHL
Maybe in a way; but, no, not really.

BERNICE
Then what bothers *me* about all this also occurred to you.

BRATENAHL
Almost from the first. But when I realized he couldn't age . . .

BERNICE
That's what bothers me. If he was immortal . . . why did he die?

(CONTINUED:)

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BRATENAHL
No one ever saw him die. He was atomized. Every molecule pulled apart.

BERNICE
Why?

BRATENAHL
I think Susan Calvin knows. And I think it's something that shouldn't be kept from people.

BERNICE
Was he . . . killed? Was he put down, do you think?

BRATENAHL
It would explain why she's afraid to see me.
(beat)
Damn it! Damn it! Nothing from Donovan and Powell . . . not a sound.

The colloid fluid in the pool—obviously water and something else—shifts color and waves of rainbow hue pulse through the pool, bubbles rising then bursting silently on the surface like a lava lamp lit from below.

BERNICE
She hasn't responded to my call.

BRATENAHL
(musing)
You know, she won't let go of me. I sometimes dream about walking into that chamber under *Xingú Xavante* and she comes out of the darkness and she's smiling, and she extends her hand and we shake, and she says, "I'm so glad you could come to visit, Robert."

BERNICE
The robot may convince Donovan and Powell. Take it easy . . . it hasn't been that long since you spoke to him. It'll work out.

(CONTINUED:)

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BRATENAHL
(wearily)
No, it's all done. I blew it. I was there, right there, and I scared the hell out of her. When that vase fell out of her hands I watched it and when it hit I knew it was all over. Shit!

There is a SOFT INSISTENT MUSICAL TONE that we HEAR OVER. It repeats several times. Bernice reaches out to a glowing color-coded series of rectangular panels set into the edge of the pool and palms one of them. One of the walls becomes a hologram chamber and a milky fog begins to swirl, finally assuming the shape of MICHAEL DONOVAN. The old man stands there, looking embarrassed. Bratenahl perceives his discomfort at Bernice's nudity, and nudges her subtly. She motions across the watery surface and shadow fog rolls in to cover her like an ephemeral garment.

DONOVAN
Didn't mean to intrude, Bratenahl.

BRATENAHL
No intrusion, Mr. Donovan; we were just talking.
(beat)
Michael Donovan, Bernice Jolo; Bernice, this is Mr. Powell's partner.

Bratenahl reaches to the edge of the pool and grabs up an edge of what looks like a beige Kleenex from a dispenser. It pops up and he shakes it out. It is a disposable fabric garment, like a short tunic. He slips into it and comes out of the pool. He comes to the hologram of Donovan, with all its substantiality.

DONOVAN
Greg and I, well, we sat around talking about you with Frinkel.

Bernice comes into the frame, also dressed in a short tunic of golden hue. She stands watching the two men, one real, the other just an image.

BRATENAHL
He thinks pretty highly of you two.

DONOVAN
Yeah, well, we've been through a lot together. He's okay.

(CONTINUED:)

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218 CONTINUED: – 3

BRATENAHL
You want to tell me something, Mr. Donovan?

DONOVAN
(awkwardly)
Hmmm. Yeah. Well.
(beat)
We're goin' out in about an hour . . .

The way he says it, gives Bratenahl pause. He looks at the old man closely.

BRATENAHL
That's the Coalsack out there. You going to plant the first booth?

DONOVAN
Didn't come to talk about that.
(beat)
Susan Calvin says she'll see you.

219 ANOTHER ANGLE – FEATURING MED. CU – THE MEN

Bratenahl is shocked. The old spaceman holds his noncommital expression. He is clearly trying to do what he's come to do without having to suffer the embarrassment of compliments or thanks. He is extremely poised, grand in a quiet way.

BRATENAHL
(finally)
Thank you, Mike.
(beat)
How'd it go?

DONOVAN
(shrugs)
We said thank you. It was something we'd never said to her before.

They stand that way for a moment. Inherent in the moment is the understanding that Bratenahl's visit, his drawing their memories back to the time when Susan Calvin had saved their lives, when she had meant more to them and *been* more to them than they'd ever cared to admit, has altered their lives in these final moments. It is awkward, and Bratenahl presses away from the explanation.

BRATENAHL
Shall I call her?

(CONTINUED:)

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219 CONTINUED:

DONOVAN
She'll call *you*. We told her where you are.

Another long moment. Then, carefully:

BRATENAHL
Mike, why did you do this for me? I was only a nuisance to you.

Donovan looks at Bernice. She senses that this is a thing best said between the two men privately.

BERNICE
I'll punch up something to eat.

She goes. Bratenahl turns back to Donovan, waits.

DONOVAN
(awkwardly)
You'll think it's a silly reason for doing anything.

BRATENAHL
I'd like to know.

Donovan draws a deep breath, looks off and around, gathering the right words. He speaks softly.

DONOVAN
Time's short for us. We've been around too long . . . everything's past now. Little things start to mean too much and . . . well . . . you won't think this's a big thing but . . .
(beat)
. . . you never called us "Pop."

Quiet.

BRATENAHL
(softly)
Thank you, Mike.
(beat)
You're not coming back from out there, are you?

Donovan won't permit *that much* closeness. He clears his throat, swipes at his nose with embarrassment, then straightens his back as best he can.

(CONTINUED:)

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DONOVAN
I gotta go.

BRATENAHL,
You'll say thanks and goodbye to Mr. Powell for me.

Donovan nods once, quickly, then the image begins to scatter into scintillations of foggy matter with lights in it. Then he's gone. Bratenahl stands staring into the empty hologram chamber. A hand comes into FRAME, rests on his shoulder. He turns and CAMERA ANGLE OPENS to include Bernice.

BERNICE
I heard.

BRATENAHL
(shaken, quiet)
They're going to go out there into the big dark, the Coalsack, and they're going to plant the last booth . . .
(beat)
. . . and just keep on going as far as they can . . . and that'll be it.

He turns, stares out one of the huge geometrically-shaped windows, out at the night sky of this alien world. She stands beside him and they move close to each other. CAMERA MOVES PAST THEM as we HEAR Bratenahl's next speech, and CAMERA GOES to HOLD THE NIGHT.

BRATENAHL (O.S.)
What they must have been when they were young men . . .

CAMERA TO NIGHT and we

SLOW FADE TO BLACK
and
FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

220 EXT. BRAZILIAN JUNGLE – DAY – LONG SHOT – DOWN-ANGLE

A flitter platform, as big as a swimming pool, but supported on invisible tractor-beams (like the effect in Scene 5 with the rods that keep rain off) MOVES SWIFTLY INTO FRAME and DOMI-
(MORE)

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220 CONTINUED:

(CONT'D.)

NATES. There is a faint hissing SOUND of the force-field that keeps it aloft. The vehicle skims across the sky as CAMERA (SPECIAL EFFECT) FOLLOWS. It descends. The vehicle can make 90° turns and halt its forward momentum to go down horizontally without arcing in. CAMERA FOLLOWS. A section of jungle tilts up, a false landscape. And down there in the two-acre section revealed by the uptilted trapdoor of foliage, we see a modernistic landing area for the platform. The flitter descends rapidly as CAMERA GOES WITH and we PASS THROUGH THE GROUND into the underground eyrie of Susan Calvin.

221 UP-ANGLE – PAST FLITTER

as the vehicle COMES DOWN INTO CAMERA and we see, above it, the false landscape trapdoor slowly tilt down to close. Everything is suffused with a blue glow, from a light-source we cannot identify.

222 FULL SCENE – ON FLITTER

as it settles to the pad. Almost immediately a cadre of advanced-style robots (of a type we haven't seen thus far) move in. The flitter platform has sunk into a proscribed circular depression in the landing pad, so it is flush with the pad itself. Now Bratenahl and Bernice step off. And we see that the "pilot" of the vehicle has been a robot built into the leading edge of the platform itself. CAMERA COMES IN on the flitter across the surface of the pad, from a LOW LEVEL.

ROBOT PILOT
Sorry about that turbulence coming over the Serra do Roncador.

BERNICE
Don't worry about it, Freddy. Mr. Bratenahl recovers quickly.

ROBOT PILOT
And don't worry about the puke, Mr. Bratenahl; my internal sweepers'll have it off the platform in no time.

Bratenahl, looking green, gives the smartass robot a look. He just nods wearily. It hasn't been a good trip for him. They walk toward CAMERA, away from flitter, as the robots move in to off-load the shaped crates of material, their tetrahedronal luggage, and to service the platform.

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223 FROM BRATENAHL & BERNICE TO 1st GUARD

He has been trailing the cadre of work robots.

1st GUARD
Doctor Jolo, Mr. Bratenahl: Doctor Calvin has asked me to serve as liaison. I'll take you to the residence if you're ready.

BERNICE
Our luggage . . .

1st GUARD
Will be there by the time we arrive.

Bratenahl stares at the 1st Guard. He ain't happy to see him.

BRATENAHL
I was wondering when I'd see you again.

1st GUARD
I must confess I didn't expect to see you here again, sir.

Bernice is looking bewildered. Bratenahl speaks to her but doesn't take his eyes off the Guard.

BRATENAHL
(to Bernice)
He and his partner did an adagio on me when I was here before.

1st GUARD
That was regrettable, sir; but I hope you'll understand the necessity. You *were* trespassing.

BRATENAHL
And this time I'm an invited guest.

The 1st Guard smiles. The 1st Guard extends one hand in a direction OFF-CAMERA and they move in that direction as the CAMERA PIVOTS to show us a small landcar with a drive-mechanism at the rear above a tiny standing platform. They go to the landcar and get in. The Guard steps up onto the platform at the rear and activates the drive mechanism.

224 CLOSE ON BRATENAHL

as he suddenly *sees something*. He looks hard as the landcar begins to hum gently preparatory to leaving.

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225 REVERSE ANGLE – BRATENAHL'S POV – WHAT HE SEES

There, far back in shadows of the storage area that must serve as loading dock area for the underground residence, someone stands watching them. As CAMERA BEGINS TO TRACK AWAY FROM THE PERSON—inferring that the car is moving—we realize it *must be* Susan Calvin. Watching.

226 FULL SHOT – THE LANDCAR

as it starts to move and Bratenahl is still craning around to see if the observer in the shadows is Calvin. The car moves forward, gathering speed, toward a dark tunnel at the far end of the unloading dock and landing pad area.

227 SHOT FROM LANDCAR – STRAIGHT AHEAD – (PROCESS)

as the car shoots forward at a remarkable rate of speed. Everything whips past, and we are suddenly in a pitch-dark tunnel. Searchbeams suddenly spear out from the landcar.

228 MOVING SHOT – STRAIGHT AHEAD – (PROCESS)

The tunnel, now lit eerily. A slipping-past-us scene going away at terrific speed.

Suddenly the landcar pops out into artificial sunlight and we are looking at the underground landscape and residence structures we saw in Scene 92. Susan Calvin's hidden kingdom beneath the lost city of *Xingú Xavante*. The landcar rushes toward the blue-glass pyramid we saw in Scene 106.

229 FULL SHOT – HIGH-ANGLE DOWN ON SCENE

from the apex of the blue-glass pyramid, into the terrace area: as the landcar glides to a stop, the Guard steps down and walks ahead of Bratenahl and Bernice, leading them up the steps to the apparently unbroken face of the pyramid.

230 CLOSE SHOT – WITH THE GROUP – TOWARD WALL

as the Guard approaches. We see now that the unbroken face of the blue-glass is actually a property of the cunning overlapping of facets, all of which catch light and cast it back as a field of radiance. There are actually corridors between the glass surfaces. The Guard indicates one such, and Bratenahl and Bernice pass inside. The Guard follows.

231 INT. PYRAMID – FULL SHOT

from Bratenahl and Bernice in f.g. showing the interior of the Calvin Residence.

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231 CONTINUED:

High, enormously-complex, and robots everywhere which, while not in exorbitant profusion, obviously run this living situation. No other humans can be seen. Bernice and Bratenahl stare in amazement.

BRATENAHL
(sub rosa to Bernice)
I told you someone bankrolled all this.

232 ON GUARD – TRUCKING SHOT

as he leads them to glass pillars that are elevators to the upper stories.

1st GUARD
Dr. Calvin has asked me to show you your accommodations.

BRATENAHL
Isn't she here?

1st GUARD
Dr. Calvin is engaged in delicate restoration of artifacts from the city aboveground. She has asked me to extend her apologies at not being here to greet you, and hopes you will refresh yourselves.

BERNICE
She'll see us later?

1st GUARD
That is up to Dr. Calvin, Dr. Jolo. But it seems logical, does it not?

Bernice arches an eyebrow. They enter the glass elevator.

233 ELEVATOR – SHOT FROM BELOW

as it shoots upward rapidly. It stops.

234 TERRACE INSIDE PYRAMID

as they emerge from the elevator. The Guard indicates an iris before them.

1st GUARD
Your suite. Six rooms, common entrance. Dr. Calvin assumed you would desire linking accommodations.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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234 CONTINUED:

1st GUARD (CONT'D.)
(beat)
If you would rather have separate suites—

BRATENAHL
This will be fine, thank you.

The Guard nods, in a courtly fashion, and goes back into the elevator, sinks quickly from view. CAMERA WITH Bernice and Bratenahl as they approach the iris and it swirls open.

235 INT. SUITE – TOWARD IRIS

as it opens and we see Bratenahl and Bernice standing there with the open atrium of the pyramid behind them. We cannot see what the suite looks like. It is dark. They stand there as CAMERA MOVES IN ON THEM.

BERNICE
Well, we're in.

BRATENAHL
There's an old phrase about walking over someone's grave.

BERNICE
Ah. So you feel like an interloper, too.

BRATENAHL
God damn that bastard Rowe. I wish to God he'd never pushed me into this.

BERNICE
He wasn't the only one pushing.

She gives him a meaningful look. He's been pushing himself. They walk INTO CAMERA and FRAME TO BLACK as we

MATCH-CUT TO:

236 EXT. TERRACE – EVENING

FROM MATCH BLACK FRAME the CAMERA PULLS BACK off Robert Bratenahl's back to show the underground empire of Susan Calvin. Bratenahl stands at the railing, looking down across the planted areas, the museum, the other futuristic buildings. He watches as the artificial lights in their sun-tracks across the high-flung roof of the underground complex dim in their traces. Evening is upon us, and we HEAR the SOUND of creatures in the forest,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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236 CONTINUED:

(CONT'D.)

crickets, the night-birds. He stands with hands on the pale white stone railing, looking, meditating. There is a WHIRRING and a large night insect settles down beside his hand. He looks at it. The insect is metal. It has luminous, transparent wings and an alien body. It is a fantasist's dream of what a robot monarch butterfly might be. He looks at it for a moment, then it whirrs into the evening sky.

BERNICE (O.S.)
I wondered where you'd gone.

The SOUND of her FOOTSTEPS behind him and he turns.

237 REVERSE ANGLE – PAST BRATENAHL TO BERNICE

She comes toward him, dressed in a remarkable gown of thin material that clings yet only entices.

BRATENAHL
(ruminatively)
She's everywhere down here.

BERNICE
Have you see her yet?

BRATENAHL
No. I think she's saving it for a propitious entrance.

BERNICE
We're not dining together, you know.

BRATENAHL
(surprised)
No, I didn't know.

BERNICE
Your friend, the major-domo, came around after you went to "take a walk" and said a special dinner had been arranged for me aboveground in the old city.

BRATENAHL
Just you?

BERNICE
It was only a hope, a desire, a mere suggestion, you understand. But I got the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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237 CONTINUED:

BERNICE (CONT'D.)
distinct impression this is the way she wants it.

BRATENAHL
(thinks in silence a moment)
Hmm. Have you seen any other humans?

BERNICE
Apart from thee and me and the major-domo?

He nods.

BERNICE (CONT'D.)
Nothing but robots as far as the eye can see. I don't think there *are* any other people down here.

He shakes his head. He can't reconcile it.

238 SHOT ACROSS TERRACE – ON 1st GUARD

as the Guard comes out of the deepening twilight toward Bratenahl and Bernice.

1st GUARD
Dr. Jolo? We're ready for the trip up to the city now.

She looks at Bratenahl, raises her eyebrows to indicate he's on his own, and follows the Guard down the steps and into the landcar. Bratenahl and CAMERA HOLD over the terrace as we SEE the car go. He stands alone.

239 HIGH SHOT – DOWN ON BRATENAHL

capturing a panoramic view of the underground residence. As darkness falls. HOLD ON HIM as we

LAP-DISSOLVE TO:

240 EXT. TERRACE – PYRAMID IN B.G. – TRUCKING IN

on Bratenahl, still standing there, staring out across the underground vista. Suddenly the blue-glass pyramid glows from within and lights up. It is awesomely beautiful. The glow suffuses the air and falls across Bratenahl. He turns away from CAMERA as CAMERA COMES IN CLOSE ON HIM and we SHOOT PAST HIM to see Susan Calvin standing there on the terrace. She comes toward

(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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240 CONTINUED:

(CONT'D.)

him and stops a polite distance. Her voice is firm and soft, but incredibly powerful.

CALVIN
Good evening, Mr. Bratenahl.

BRATENAHL
Good evening, Dr. Calvin.

She comes a little nearer. Stops again.

CALVIN
Would you care to join me for dinner?

241 CLOSE ON BRATENAHL

as he realizes she is dominating him. We can see him forcibly get control of his own emotions.

BRATENAHL
I owe you an apology.

CALVIN
For continually trying to invade my privacy?

BRATENAHL
No, not so much for that; I apologize for startling you when I was here the last time; for causing you to drop that beautiful vase.

CALVIN
Oh, yes. I'd forgotten.

BRATENAHL
No you didn't.

As previous dialogue progresses CAMERA PULLS BACK from Bratenahl and CIRCLES to include Calvin. She smiles for an instant at his remark, then the smile tightens.

CALVIN
You're right. I didn't forget. But I accept the apology.

(beat)

Shall we go in to dinner?

He nods, she turns and he follows her into the pyramid as CAMERA HOLDS LONG on their departure.

CUT TO:

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242 INT. DINING ROOM – FULL SHOT

It is incongruent. A traditional baronial dining room, with massive oak chairs and table, sideboard, wall hangings of the race that inhabited the lost city many centuries ago. Very rich, very elegant, very warm and comfortable. They sit across from each other, drinking coffee. The table has been cleared, but we see enough remains of silverware and china to know they have eaten and are now getting to the crunch-point of talk.

BRATENAHL
How long have you been excavating the city up there?

CALVIN
Almost fifteen years. They were a remarkable people.

BRATENAHL
Do the robots make good diggers?

CALVIN
They're precise. Very delicate with potshards and other artifacts.

BRATENAHL
I shouldn't think you'd be interested in the remains of a lost race of human beings.

CALVIN
Because I'm surrounded by robots?

BRATENAHL
Because you've been surrounded by robots all your life.

She appraises him for a moment. Then offers the silver coffee urn. He extends the bone china cup and she pours.

CALVIN
You've spent a lot of time on me.

BRATENAHL
Apparently not enough, Dr. Calvin. I'm no closer to unpeeling your secrets than I was when I started.

CALVIN
Unpeeling my secrets. Vivid image. You make me sound like an artichoke.

(CONTINUED:)

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242 CONTINUED:

Bratenahl smiles. Calvin doesn't.

BRATENAHL
Something very peculiar . . .

CALVIN
Yes? What's that?

BRATENAHL
Everything in the central banks on you—and it's very little, I assure you—paints you as hard, cold, driven by your work, standoffish, emotionless.

CALVIN
And you find me otherwise?

BRATENAHL
No, you maintain the idiom here, with me. I can understand that: I'm an intruder, I've made a damned nuisance of myself, ferreted you out.
(beat)
But the gap between reality and fantasy is amazing.
(beat)
Norman Bogert remembers an unrequited love affair that hurt you deeply . . .

She isn't expecting that. She almost winces, shivers and draws herself up.

BRATENAHL (CONT'D.)
Sorry.
(beat)
Donovan and Powell: they remember how you saved their lives and almost lost yours.

She looks very uncomfortable. But what else did she expect?

CALVIN
It was part of the job.

BRATENAHL
Alfred Lanning tells a story about your father and a robot you called Robbie. A very touching story.

(CONTINUED:)

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CALVIN
That was a long time ago. I'd almost forgotten . . .
(she catches his look, smiles)
. . . no, I hadn't forgotten. Dear Robbie.

BRATENAHL
So you see, you're quite a series of contradictions.

CALVIN
And you've spent months trying to reconcile those contradictions.

BRATENAHL
At first I was just intrigued; then I was ordered to pursue it. And finally I didn't need to be ordered.

CALVIN
And then you sent me a message.

BRATENAHL
It must be true. I'm here.
(beat)
Are you ready to talk about it yet?

CALVIN
(tensely)
Perhaps not *just* yet, Mr. Bratenahl.

They sit staring at each other. The silence grows tense.

BRATENAHL
Where is Bernice?

CALVIN
At this moment?

BRATENAHL
Yes, at this moment; if you know.

CAMERA has PULLED BACK to 2-SHOT during preceding dialogue. Now it PULLS BACK FARTHER as the shadows lapping at the circle of light in which they dine intrude on the FRAME.

CALVIN
She's having dinner; aboveground in the old city.

(CONTINUED:)

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242 CONTINUED: – 3

CAMERA CONTINUES BACK till they grow smaller in the FRAME and the shadows dominate . . . their VOICES RETREAT as well.

BRATENAHL
Dining alone her first night here? While you dine with me? Another oddity.

CAMERA BACK until they are now lost in shadows that fill the FRAME and we HEAR CALVIN'S VOICE OVER.

CALVIN (V.O.)
Then you won't take offense if I go to join her for dessert . . .

MATCH-DISSOLVE TO:

243 INT. ANCIENT CITY – NIGHT

CAMERA COMES IN THRU DARKNESS that MATCHES with DARKNESS of the preceding SCENE and we HEAR CALVIN'S VOICE OVER.

CALVIN (V.O.)
Of course I'd remember you.

BERNICE (V.O.)
I was only a child when I came to Old Earth with my father.

CAMERA CONTINUES IN through shadows and we realize we are in one of the ancient temples of the lost city. The architecture is ornate and gorgeous, but it emerges slowly as we come toward another pool of light, and we can see that a smaller, more intimate table than in the preceding SCENE has been set up. Two people are dining. Bernice and someone whose back is to us as CAMERA DOLLIES IN.

CALVIN (O.S.)
You were a memorable child. Very loving.
(beat)
Are you a loving adult, Bernice?

BERNICE (O.S.)
Do you mean Robert?

CALVIN (O.S.)
Yes. Are you in love with him?

(CONTINUED:)

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243 CONTINUED:

CAMERA IN FULL to HOLD the dining scene, and we realize the person sitting across from Bernice Jolo is . . . Susan Calvin. Whom we have just seen—a match-dissolve ago—taking leave of Robert Bratenahl belowground.

BERNICE
(flustered)
There's fifty years between your definition of the word and mine.

CALVIN
I don't mean to pry, but I think it will be necessary for me to know how you feel about that young man. Define it any way you choose.

BERNICE
He eludes me.

CALVIN
I don't know what that means.

BERNICE
Without moving, I pursue him.

CALVIN
And without standing still he remains always in the same place?

BERNICE
God, I'm speaking in Egyptian riddles!

CALVIN
Do you love him . . . are you in love *with* him?

BERNICE
Both and neither. If he could ever stop being consumed by his obsessions—such as chasing you—I might allow myself to start thinking about him-and-love in the same breath.

CALVIN
(beat, changes subject)
I'm sorry I wasn't able to attend your father's funeral.

(CONTINUED:)

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243 CONTINUED: – 2

Bernice stares at her. The change has been silkily made. But she chooses not to let it go.

BERNICE
Doctor Cal—

CALVIN
(interrupts)
Advanced age only permits two elements of outrageous behavior: one is carefully-measured rudeness that can be construed as charmingly eccentric . . .
(beat)
. . . the other is falling asleep over dessert.
(beat)
Neither one gets in the way of your calling me Susan.

Bernice smiles. She leans forward, affectionately.

BERNICE
I understand his obsession. With you.

CALVIN
(tiny smile)
I credit his persistence. He speaks of *unpeeling* my secrets.

BERNICE
That's up to you. And you don't know me any better than you know him . . .
(beat)
But he's serious. He's a *serious* man. If you trust him, he probably won't disappoint you.

CALVIN
(thoughtfully)
Tell me: do you think people are basically good?

BERNICE
(considers; this is obviously important)
Not all the time. Obviously.

CALVIN
Mmm. Yes, obviously.

(CONTINUED:)

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BERNICE
Why do you ask me that?

CALVIN
(brushes it off)
Oh . . . just woolgathering. Do you know the word?

BERNICE
(intently)
It wasn't just courtesy, your asking me to come with Robert. Was it?

CALVIN
I wanted to see you again.

BERNICE
(amazed)
You really want to talk to me, don't you?

CALVIN
I have things on my mind. It may be time for change . . .

BERNICE
I don't know what you mean . . .

Calvin sighs heavily. She pushes away from the table.

CALVIN
This is unconscionable. I'm babbling. You must forgive me, Bernice. I have many things to sort out, and I'm being an obtuse old sphinx.
(beat)
We'll talk again. I need my sleep now. Tomorrow?

Bernice smiles, nods her head. Susan Calvin stares at her for a long moment, seems about to say something . . . then goes into the darkness. Bernice sits in the pool of light staring after her. In a moment the Guard appears at her elbow. She isn't aware of him for a time, then starts as she realizes he's there. She nods, rises, and follows him. The table sits empty in the light.

CUT TO:

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244 SAME AS 234

Bratenahl stands alone, staring off across Calvin's domain. Bernice comes out of the darkness. The Guard nods goodnight and passes off in another direction, into the dark. Bernice walks to Bratenahl.

BERNICE
Hi.

BRATENAHL
Oh . . . hello, there. How was dinner?

She comes to him and takes his hands, looks at him closely.

BERNICE
I've never encountered anyone like her, Robert. She said very little, but I had the feeling she was plumbing my consciousness to the core.
(beat)
I think she wanted to use my judgment of you as a gauge of your trustworthiness. I think you're about to find out what you want to know.

She looks off. She seems very disturbed. He draws her close.

BRATENAHL
You're shivering . . .

BERNICE
I can't get it out of my head that we're all going to learn something we don't want to know.

She moves very close to him, buries her face in his chest. Then she looks up at him, solemnly.

BRATENAHL
(gently)
What . . . ?

BERNICE
We'll go now and make love. I think I won't be seeing you for a long time.

He stares at her with concern and a lack of comprehension. Then she moves away, taking him by the hand. They go into the darkness.

DISSOLVE TO:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
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245 ENDLESS METAL CORRIDOR – NIGHT

FRAME SILVERY AND DARK as we HEAR a WHIRRING and the metal night-flying insect from Scene 236 drops down THRU FRAME as CAMERA FOLLOWS. The robot monarch butterfly drops down and hovers above Susan Calvin. She stands in a long corridor of silvery metal. We cannot see either end of the tunnel. It stretches away in both directions . . . a road *from* nowhere *to* nowhere. Susan wears a long caftan, like a nightshirt. We will have the feeling she is unable to sleep and is walking to settle her thoughts. The robot butterfly hovers and she looks up at it. Then from the butterfly we HEAR the hollow, faintly tinny VOICES of Bratenahl and Bernice recorded from the preceding scene:

BERNICE'S VOICE
FROM BUTTERFLY (FILTER)
I think she wanted to use my judgment of you as a gauge of your trustworthiness. I think you're about to find out what you want to know.

BRATENAHL'S VOICE
FROM BUTTERFLY (FILTER)
You're shivering . . .

BERNICE'S VOICE
FROM BUTTERFLY (FILTER)
I can't get it out of my head that we're all going to learn something we don't want to know.

BRATENAHL'S VOICE
FROM BUTTERFLY (FILTER)
What . . . ?

BERNICE'S VOICE
FROM BUTTERFLY (FILTER)
We'll go now and make love. I think I won't be seeing you for a long time.

The butterfly hovers there for another moment, then springs up out of the FRAME, leaving Susan Calvin alone, looking lost and empty. Is she thinking about years without love or companionship? Perhaps. She begins walking down the corridor as CAMERA GOES WITH. A few beats, then we HEAR VOICE OVER of Susan Calvin and another voice. We haven't heard this voice before. It is STEPHEN BYERLEY'S VOICE, as we will realize from internal evidence very quickly . . . but though we've never heard Byerley till

(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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245 CONTINUED:

(CONT'D.)

this moment, there is *something familiar* in the sound. It is not necessary for us to consider *who* the voice of Byerley reminds us of, not at this time. But it lodges in our mind . . . and the audience's mind, as well.

BYERLEY OVER (ECHO)
You'll have to do it alone, Susan.

CALVIN OVER (ECHO)
I can't, Stephen. It's been too long. Just a little longer.

BYERLEY OVER (ECHO)
Forty-four years is a long time; long enough. If I've learned one thing from all you've taught me about people, it's knowing when to let go.

(beat)

It's time, Susan.

CALVIN OVER (ECHO)
Chaos. A return of the dark ages, Stephen.

BYERLEY OVER (ECHO)
No, you'll tell them how it was. They'll understand. You gave me faith in them . . . they have the spark of godhood in them.

(beat)

I give that faith back to you.

CALVIN OVER (ECHO)
How will I tell them? So they'll be able to understand how it was?

BYERLEY OVER (ECHO)
You'll find a way. You'll find the proper voice. Now . . . you do it alone. No strangers.

(beat)

Goodbye, dear friend . . . dear Susan . . .

CALVIN OVER (ECHO)
Goodbye, Stephen . . . goodbye . . .

(CONTINUED:)

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245 CONTINUED: – 2

She continues walking and now CAMERA HOLDS as she passes down the metal corridor. The silver radiance that lights the corridor blossoms and she passes into it as if walking into the sun. The light fills the FRAME and we HEAR two things: the ECHO VOICE of CALVIN saying "Goodbye" over and over, growing ever fainter until it is overcome by the SOUND of the WHIRRING of the robot butterfly as it swoops down into the FRAME and the CAMERA FOLLOWS IT UP into the blazing light of the silver metal corridor and we go to

BLACK FRAME and
DISSOLVE TO:

246 BLACK FRAME

We HEAR the O.S. SOUND of the WHIRRING of robot wings and then the FRAME BLINKS ON and we see the room from Scene 235. FRAME BLINKS BACK TO BLACK and then BLINKS ON AGAIN as we realize we are seeing the room from Bratenahl's POV as he lies in the bed. The SOUND of WHIRRING dies away as he opens his eyes and CAMERA MOVES RIGHT THEN LEFT as if orienting itself from his POV. To the left of the bed is a nightstand of modern design. CAMERA HOLDS on the nightstand and we see the gorgeous amber and gold-trimmed vase Susan Calvin dropped and broke in Scene 123. It is the *same* vase. A hand reaches out from the bottom of the FRAME and touches the vase. It is Bratenahl's hand.

247 FULL SHOT – ON BRATENAHL IN BED

as he sits bolt upright, swings around and *looks* at the vase. He touches it, cannot believe he sees it. Then we HEAR a VOICE from O.S. and Bratenahl spins around.

1st GUARD (O.S.)
Good morning, sir.

248 ANOTHER ANGLE – WITH 1st GUARD

standing just inside the open iris, the terrace beyond.

1st GUARD
I didn't mean to startle you.

Bratenahl is naked, but rather than a blanket covering him, the golden mist that covered the bed still clings to his lower body as he sits on the edge near the vase. He looks around for Bernice, rubs his face.

(CONTINUED:)

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248 CONTINUED:

BRATENAHL
Where's Dr. Jolo?

1st GUARD
She's gone back to Sigma Draconis 5. There was an emergency call for her.

BRATENAHL
(looking resigned)
At least half of that was a lie.
(he indicates the vase)
Where did that come from? It wasn't here last night.

1st GUARD
Dr. Calvin asked me to bring it up and leave it.

BRATENAHL
Is that a lie, too?

Bratenahl gets out of bed.

1st GUARD
I do my best not to lie, sir. But everything *is* open to interpretation.

BRATENAHL
Okay, champ, what's the program for today?

1st GUARD
Dr. Calvin thinks you'd like to see some of the archive tapes.

Bratenahl nods. It is obvious he's beginning a program of intelligence-gathering, at Calvin's behest. He looks around. The ablutatorium—a kind of bathroom—is off the sleeping chamber. He starts toward it.

BRATENAHL
You can wait while I clean up or come back in a little while.

The Guard goes to the iris, still open.

1st GUARD
I'll be back.

He goes, the iris sphincters closed, and Bratenahl goes into the
(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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248 CONTINUED: – 2

(CONT'D.)

circular shower mechanism. A glass door slides around, there is a blaze of light and a hiss, and Robert Bratenahl steps back out, shaved, showered and smelling good. He goes to the wall mechanism with buttons of various colors, punches out a code, and fresh clothing—neatly folded, obviously of disposable paper-fabric—is slid out through slots. He shakes out the pants, and starts to get into them as we

CUT TO:

249 INSIDE THE EGG

It is an all-gray chamber, a shape as if we are inside an egg, but the walls are an unbroken 360° screen. It is a chamber for viewing archive transcriptions. The floor is soft and molds itself to whatever shape is needed for optimum viewing. Bratenahl lounges on the floor. The 1st Guard stands as if about to leave.

1st GUARD
These selections have been chosen by Dr. Calvin, they're arranged chronologically.

BRATENAHL
What are they?

1st GUARD
(ignores question)
If you need anything, just call; the room monitor will relay to me.
(beat)
Otherwise the room functions as any comm unit would. Rerun, reverse, freeze . . . just ask the room.

He nods once, as if that ended the conversation whether Bratenahl liked it that way or not, and he walks to the wall. An invisible seam opens and he goes out. The room reseals without a break. The light that has no source fades to duskiness and suddenly the entire egg begins to light with a full-circle scene. A warm female voice, the VOICE OF THE EGG, fills the enclosure.

VOICE OF THE EGG
Selections from the career of Stephen Byerley, First President of the Galactic Federation.

(CONTINUED:)

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249 CONTINUED:

The walls hold a view of a tall, prematurely gray man in his early forties. Handsome, tall, very Gary Cooperesque; but there is something about him that seems familiar. We cannot place it, but we see that Bratenahl notices it, too. The first sequence is of the man Stephen Byerley, obviously on the campaign trail. A peculiar campaign, of course, because it is Systemwide, not merely national.

250 THE FIRST SCENE – IN WRAPAROUND PROJECTION

Byerley, in CU, as CAMERA PULLS BACK to show us he is in a United Nations–like general assembly chamber. The semicircular desk that fills one side of the chamber has many delegates of alien worlds seated at places before which placards naming their worlds of origin identify them. He walks toward first one, then another, speaking and gesticulating gravely. There is enormous dignity in his manner. Openness, honesty, and we trust him at once. The words he speaks are soft and we cannot make them out, but the Voice of the Egg SPEAKS OVER:

VOICE OF THE EGG
He founded the Federation in a time of anguish. The Four Worlds War had begun two Old Earth years before.

Byerley continues down the line, speaking to one alien after another. As he speaks, each punches a button on the desk before him or her. On the wall behind them a disc lights: either gold for acceptance or black for nonacceptance. All but two are gold. One after another, until he reaches the last, gets a gold disc, and the aliens rise as a body to cheer him.

VOICE OF THE EGG (CONT'D.)
He brought uncommon reason and fairness even to the vanquished. It was the beginning of the Golden Age.

251 thru 257 SERIES OF VIGNETTE SCENES ON WRAPAROUND WALL

Byerley dictating a manifesto that appears on the blank wall behind him in five line segments—each one in a different written language, four of them alien symbols, one in English.

Byerley meeting with Susan Calvin at a robot factory, shaking hands. Do they hold the touch a moment longer than necessary?

VOICE OF THE EGG
He created the Manifesto of Equality. All
(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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251 thru 257 CONTINUED:

(CONT'D.)

races with one voice in the destiny of the Federation.

(beat)

He removed slave status from the creation of robots. Building on the base of the Three Laws, he made them partners in the outward thrust of the human race.

Byerley laughing, standing in a group of men and women dressed in technician's gear, all of them relating with joy to a glass tower rising into the sky behind them.

Byerley at the unveiling of a monument in honor of those who settled the Outer Cold Worlds. A beautiful acrylic sculpture with humans and aliens together, looking toward the stars.

VOICE OF THE EGG

He was the spiritual drive behind the expansions of colonies to the Outer Cold Worlds . . . he was the guiding force that established the teleport system, making the farthest planet accessible to all . . .

Bratenahl continues to watch as scene after scene rolls across the wraparound and we

DISSOLVE TO:

258 SAME AS 117 – INTERIOR LOST CITY MUSEUM

Where Bratenahl first encountered Susan Calvin on her own territory. As the scene resolves itself, Bratenahl walks into FRAME FROM F.G. toward a complex table arrangement where Susan Calvin sits hunched closely over a microscope with a computer attached. There is a cat's cradle affair of minute "waldos" (extensible arms with pincers for lifting and moving at their ends) connected to the computer and microscope. He comes closer. She speaks without looking up.

CALVIN

Hello. I'll be with you in a few minutes.

BRATENAHL

If I'm interrupting—

CALVIN

No, it's all right. I'm near the end of this piece. Come look if you wish.

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259 CLOSE ON BRATENAHL

as he moves very close over her shoulder, CAMERA MOVING PAST HIM so he leaves the frame, over Calvin's shoulder to the light-stage on which what seem to be a million tiny shattered pieces of pottery lie in infinitely small pieces. She eyeballs close to the viewfinder of the electron-microscope, and her right hand dances a rapid, intricate pattern on the computer's miniaturized keyboard. On a small readout screen, vector lines move here and there, like routes on a road-map. Finally, when the lines are so dense they cannot be separated, she punches the red button and the waldos begin moving in and out among the pieces of shattered pottery on the light-stage. They begin to reassemble the broken item. As one or two or three pieces are laid together, a pin-nozzle sprays them and they adhere without seam or break. It all happens so fast (ACCELERATED STOP-MOTION CAMERA) that within moments—with vector lines vanishing from the screen as each assemblage is accomplished—the entire piece of lost race pottery is assembled . . . a bowl of deepest crimson, exquisite beyond description, with cameo'd and intaglio'd designs swimming across its ancient surface. As the last tiny piece is slipped into the jigsaw structure, the nozzle sprays, the waldos go back to their rest positions, the computer strobes END, and Susan Calvin looks up wearily. Hair trails into her eyes. She brushes it back. She sighs and smiles.

CAMERA HAS PULLED BACK to HOLD Calvin and Bratenahl.

CALVIN
You wouldn't think something that beautiful could be such an object of votive horror, would you?

Bratenahl's look tells her she hasn't made her point.

CALVIN (CONT'D.)
It was used to catch the flow of blood from virgins whose hearts were ripped out as sacrifice to a god named Xaxaltay.

Bratenahl shakes his head and a bemused, bitter little chuckle escapes him.

CALVIN (CONT'D.)
Sit down. Let's talk.

He moves around the table setup, takes a formfit.

(CONTINUED:)

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259 CONTINUED:

BRATENAHL
Is this the payoff? We talk about what you wouldn't talk about last night?

CALVIN
You've been trying to see me, to *unpeel* me for some time; why are you nervous now?

BRATENAHL
Because I feel manipulated. Because I *know* Stephen Byerley was immortal and I don't know why he died, and because it's possible you had a hand in his death . . . and I'm here alone.

CALVIN
All that. What a welter of fears and random data. Your head must be like the Sargasso Sea, filled with flotsam and jetsam . . .

He holds up a hand.

BRATENAHL
And one thing more . . . before I forget.
(beat)
I found the vase this morning. That was very kind of you, taking me off the hook like that.

CALVIN
(tersely)
Unless I'm the assassin responsible for the death of the President of the Galactic Federation. In which case it was a clever ploy intended to lull you into a false sense of security.
(beat)
My God, Bratenahl, conspiracy paranoia at *your* age.
(beat)
Tell me, Bratenahl: do you think people, for the most part, are good?

(CONTINUED:)

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259 CONTINUED: – 2

Bratenahl looks at her. We can assume Bernice told him of the question asked by Calvin the night before.

BRATENAHL
I think they'd like to be good. It's not always easy.

CALVIN
Quod erat demonstrandum. Obvious, but probably true. It's easier if one has a good example to work from.

BRATENAHL
(testy)
Look, Dr. Calvin: I take it that you *want* to tell me some things. I've battered down your door; you've let me in; you've pretty much established I can be trusted, I guess; but you don't *get* to it!

CALVIN
(snaps)
In my own way, Bratenahl! At my own pace!

He raises his hands. To placate her.

BRATENAHL
Okay! Okay! I'm sorry I snapped.

CALVIN
I've kept this to myself for a long time. Telling it doesn't come easily for me.

BRATENAHL
(softly)
Okay, your way. Please . . .

260 2-SHOT

As she relaxes. Bratenahl settles back, hoping he hasn't blown it again.

CALVIN
What did you get from the clips about Stephen Byerley?

BRATENAHL
What you wanted me to get: the golden age.

(CONTINUED:)

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260 CONTINUED:

CALVIN
He was a remarkable man. Better than any other man I've ever met.
(beat, musing)
Almost any other man . . .

She gets a faraway look for a moment, then comes back to herself, and her face hardens, as if she's finally made the decision to plunge ahead and tell it all, from the start.

CALVIN (CONT'D.)
(resigned)
I believe you began with the question of whether Stephen Byerley and I were lovers.

BRATENAHL
(blurts)
No, I . . .

CALVIN
(tough)
Shut up, Bratenahl. You wanted it all, and that's what you'll get. Beginning with Lenny. That's where my "love affair" with Stephen Byerley began . . . with Lenny . . .

261 SUPERIMPOSE SHOT – CLOSE ON CALVIN

As she begins speaking, the lighting in the scene alters and we see a SUPER of her younger self that FADES IN as her present-time, 82-year-old self FADES OUT.

CALVIN
It was around 2032; U.S. Robots was trying to perfect a new LNE prototype. They'd discovered Hellfire Mountain on Mercury . . . the diamond mountain . . .

BRATENAHL (O.S.)
Strictly regulated: I've read about it. Very nearly drove the Old Earth diamond cartel crazy.

CALVIN
Mmm. Well, U.S. RoboMek was hired to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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261 CONTINUED:

CALVIN (CONT'D.)
develop a highly sensitive LNE model that could cut the new stones; many times harder and whiter than those found on Earth.
(beat)
But something went wrong on the production line . . .

As the preceding speech is heard, the aged Susan has just about faded out, as has the scene in the lost race museum, and Susan, age 38, has faded in, seen in

SUPERIMPOSE DISSOLVE:

262 INT. CALVIN'S OFFICE – U.S. ROBOTS BUILDING

ON SUSAN in her younger incarnation, as she turns to face a suddenly opening door and the presence of NORMAN BOGERT (whom we have seen previously in film clips and as a frozen form in a crypt). He sticks his head in, looking frantic, and shouts at her:

BOGERT
Storage room seven, on the double!

CALVIN
What . . . ?

BOGERT
Oh boy! Have *we* got a problem!

She gets up quickly and moves toward the door, still ajar. Bogert is gone already.

263 CORRIDOR – ON CALVIN'S OFFICE DOOR

as she comes through. She turns into CAMERA and CAMERA GOES WITH her as she rushes down one corridor and up another. As she moves fast, Bogert appears from a side-corridor with Lanning (age 68) and a short, fat, bald man in a very rumpled, almost comically 1940s sort of suit. He is SVEN DE KUYPER. They elbow past her, and all keep moving toward a set of double doors ten feet high at the end of the corridor. A plate above the doors says

STORAGE 7—OFF LIMITS

They move toward it, fast, and Bogert tries to open the door. It is locked. He bangs on it with his fist.

(CONTINUED:)

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263 CONTINUED

BOGERT
Morty! Morty, open the damned door!

From within comes a VOICE.

MORTY'S VOICE (O.S.)
Who is it?

BOGERT
Norman Bogert, you ass! And Lanning, Calvin and De Kuyper!

The door opens onto darkness. They rush inside.

264 INT. STORAGE 7

A high-ceilinged, otherwise empty room filled with a dozen tall robots, very humanoid, more advanced than Herbie in Scene 175. Extremely delicate hands, long and tapering, with six fingers on each hand. They fill the room, standing silently.

LANNING
Mortimer . . . turn up the light in here.

The technician, variously called MORTY or MORTIMER, turns a rheostat on the wall. Light floods the room. Morty is in his early twenties, big adam's apple, gangly and merely a walk-on. He stands silently. De Kuyper speaks first, with a heavy Dutch accent.

DE KUYPER
What is the problem? No more cost overrun, I tell you. My firm won't stand for it, I tell you!

LANNING
Please, Mr. De Kuyper.

BOGERT
Okay, Morty. Now go over it again. Just the way you told me.

Morty edges forward. He's scared. This is Lanning, the head of the whole damned corporation. And Calvin, that hard-faced robopsychologist. But he squeaks his story.

MORTY
I came in to run the preliminary vocalizing tests just like it says to do here on my clipboard . . .
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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264 CONTINUED:

MORTY (CONT'D.)
(he shows it)
. . . and I walked up to each one of these Lennys, and I said to Lenny One, just like it says to say . . .
(gulps)
How are you.

Everyone watches him. They wait.

MORTY (CONT'D.)
(twitching)
And Lenny One answers, real nice and clear, "I am well and ready to begin my functions, sir. I trust you are well, too."

DE KUYPER
(dyspeptic)
Well, that was what he was *supposed* to say, no?

Morty gets flustered. He fumfuhs and almost drops the clipboard. Lanning speaks sternly.

LANNING
Mr. De Kuyper, we've all been made painfully aware of your supervisory role on this project . . .

DE KUYPER
(interrupts)
The Lodestone Corporation . . .

LANNING
(interrupts him)
. . . sent you to *assist* us, not hamper us in our work. Now please be still, sir.

BOGERT
Go on, Morty.

MORTY
(stammering)
Well, uh, yeah . . . yes, sir. So Lenny One was okay, and so was Lenny Two and Lenny Th—

(CONTINUED:)

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264 CONTINUED: – 2

DE KUYPER
(explodes)
By *damn*!

MORTY
(quickly)
But when I got to Lenny Nine, I said how are you and *he* said . . .

They wait. A pin could drop.

LANNING
Well?

MORTY
He, uh, he said, as best I can repeat it, sir . . .
(beat, in baby voice)
da da, goo goo, da da da.

They all stare at him.

265 WITH SUSAN CALVIN

as she turns to the robots. We go with her as she finds the Lenny with the numeral 9 on its chest.

CALVIN
(to robot)
How are you, Lenny?

The robot looks down with soulful receptors.

LENNY
Goo goo, da da, doo doo . . .

It stands. Susan looks at it.

CALVIN
Lenny: multiplication tables, by twelve. Twelve times twelve . . .

She waits. Lenny looks at her.

They all stare. Then, after a moment:

LENNY
(querulously)
Goo goo . . . ?

Her mouth drops open and a pixilated expression hits her. But it's stunned disbelief from everyone else as we

CUT TO:

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266 INT. METAL SHOP – DAY

CLOSE ON a fountain of sparks. CAMERA BACK to show Susan Calvin wearing a futuristic version of a welder's mask, using an equally advanced laser-torch to cut metal. She is making something but we can't tell what it is. Behind her, Bogert stands with arms akimbo, looking pissed off.

BOGERT
It makes no sense. How did the flaw get into the programming?

CALVIN
(doesn't look up)
We'll never know. Someone erred, and probably isn't even aware of it. Punched out the coding to the impulse implanter incorrectly.
(beat)
When we ran it back the computer checked out negative for all attempts at finding the flaw.

BOGERT
The positronic brain is beyond redemption. So many of the higher functions have been cancelled out by these meaningless directions that the result is very like a human baby.

She turns off the torch, straightens and lifts the mask. Sweat dots her nose and forehead. She wipes off on a heavy quilted bib she wears to protect her.

CALVIN
Why seem so surprised, Norman? We make every effort to create a robot as mentally like a human being as possible. Eliminate what we call the adult functions and naturally what's left is a human infant . . . mentally speaking.

267 ANOTHER ANGLE – FAVORING BOGERT

BOGERT
(resignedly)
We'll have to eat the cost, but it does seem a shame to have to melt it down.

(CONTINUED:)

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267 CONTINUED:

Susan is fitting together the part of the metal item she's been making. Now she stops and looks up at him with shock.

CALVIN
Melt it down? Don't be absurd.

BOGERT
Now listen here, Susan . . . don't start one of your . .

CALVIN
(forcefully)
I want to conduct more tests. Forget melting.

Bogert is incensed. Calvin is pulling one of her numbers again. He stalks around her, raging quietly, trying to be an authoritarian figure. Susan keeps on working at the spherical object, paying attention to him . . . but not *strict* attention. Bogert grows more frustrated: she dominates him with her focus on the construction in her hands.

BOGERT
The damned thing is useless! If there's one thing completely and abysmally useless it's a robot without a job it can perform. You don't pretend there's a job this thing can do . . . *do you?*

CALVIN
No, of course not.
(beat)
Hand me those little metal helixes, please.

Bogert is thrown off-stride. He looks around wildly. Then he sees half a dozen objects as described, on the side-bench. He grabs them up and carries them to her, hands them to her.

BOGERT
It's bad enough De Kuyper is causing trouble with Lodestone over this . . . he's running in a *disastrous* report . . . inefficient . . . big screw-up . . .

She has now assembled the object. It is spherical, hollow, with a handle, and the little metal helixes inside. As she screws the halves of the round section together, she looks at Bogert with finality. He sees the look.

(CONTINUED:)

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267 CONTINUED: – 2

BOGERT (CONT'D.)
Oh, what's the use? At least will you keep us appraised of your tests?
(beat, as he stares at the object)
What *is* that thing?

She holds it up, smiles happily, and shakes it. It clatters with a funny little sound.

CALVIN
A rattle.

Bogert's face falls apart. He stares at it as though she has won one. He shakes his head. She shakes the rattle. CAMERA IN on the rattle as we

MATCH-CUT TO:

268 INT. SUSAN CALVIN'S OFFICE – DAY

MATCH-CUT ON RATTLE now being held by Lenny. He is shaking it. And cooing. But that *voice*! It's spectacular. Almost musical. Utterly charming, refreshing, childish but like a celeste, the syllables like heavenly chimes. Really terrific. CAMERA BACK to show Lenny, six feet tall, six-fingered, seated on the floor with legs straight out like a baby, entranced by his toy. As CAMERA ANGLE WIDENS we see that one entire wall of the office is a screen on which holds a highly magnified reproduction of a positronic-path chart of a robot brain, apparently the chart to the LNE models. As Susan carefully traces the blunted paths through their contortions, Lenny opens and closes his legs, makes delightful cooing sounds. After a moment, she turns to the robot. She speaks softly.

CALVIN
Lenny . . . Lenny . . . hoo hoo, Lenny . . .

She keeps this up till Lenny looks up at her and makes a querulous cooing sound. A smile of pleasure crosses her face. She comes over and stoops down, touches him.

CALVIN (CONT'D.)
Raise your hand, Lenny. Hand—up.
(she shows with her own hand)
Hand—up . . .

She repeats the movement. Lenny follows with his own eyes. Up. Down. Up. Down. Then it makes an abortive move with the hand not holding the rattle.

(CONTINUED:)

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268 CONTINUED:

LENNY
Eh—uh . . .

CALVIN
(gravely)
Very *good*, Lenny. Try again. Hand—up.

Very gently she reaches out and takes the hand with her own. Raises it. Lowers it, repeating over and over . . .

CALVIN (CONT'D.)
Hand—up. Hand—up. Hand—up . . .

269 TRACKING SHOT – ACROSS OFFICE

From Susan working with Lenny, CAMERA TRACKS AROUND the wall to the glass window facing out on the corridor. Alfred Lanning and Norman Bogert stand there talking, watching her. Lanning raises a hand to cut off Bogert's impassioned remarks, and goes to the door. He opens it and steps through into the office, closing the door behind him.

270 PAST SUSAN & LENNY TO LANNING

as the tall old man stops just inside the door, hands folded in front of him. He smiles at her gently.

LANNING
Intruding?

CALVIN
No, of course not, Alfred. Just going over the blunted paths in Lenny's brain.

He stares at her a moment. Then walks around, stepping over Lenny's outstretched legs. The robot coos at him.

LANNING
(gently)
The LNE model is in production now.

CALVIN
De Kuyper still running around making authoritarian noises?

LANNING
(offhandedly)
Oh, well, you know. Ibsen once said: "To live is to war with trolls."
(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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270 CONTINUED:

LANNING (CONT'D.)
(beat)
He expresses regular interest in your friend here. Seems to think he has a claim even on our rejects.

CALVIN
To the point: you want something of me.

LANNING
Our commitment to Lodestone is very nearly ended. With the LNE on the line and doing well, it seems to me that working with this defective specimen is useless. Shouldn't it be melted and we move on to new areas?

She stands. Behind her, Lenny moves his hand up and down in sporadic sequence, staring at his six fingers and cooing.

CALVIN
In short, Alfred, you're annoyed that I'm wasting my so-valuable time. And Norman Bogert is something more than merely annoyed.
(beat)
Feel relieved. My time is *not* being wasted. I am *working* with Lenny.

LANNING
But the work has no meaning.

CALVIN
(ominously quiet)
I'll be the judge of that, Alfred.

LANNING
Can you at least tell me what that meaning *is*? What are you doing with it right now, for instance?

CALVIN
I'm trying to get Lenny to raise his hand on command, and to imitate the sound of the word.

At that moment, cute as a bug, Lenny seems to respond to Susan's having said "raise hand' and he raises his hand waveringly, six delicate fingers splayed as a child's.

(CONTINUED:)

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270 CONTINUED: – 2

LENNY
Eh—uh . . .

Lanning cannot keep from smiling, and he shakes his head:

LANNING
That voice is amazing. I've heard a great many robots, but never anything like that. How does it happen?

CALVIN
I don't quite know. His transmitter is a normal one. He could speak normally, I'm sure. He just doesn't. Something in the positronic paths I haven't pinpointed yet.

LANNING
Well, pinpoint it, for God's sake! Speech like that might be useful.

Susan gives him a look that says, I've wormed you around to my position, now don't you feel foolish? Lanning harrumphs, looks embarrassed, realizes he is, after all, the Director. Still harrumphing, he retreats and goes. Susan smiles to herself. And Lenny raises his hand:

LENNY
(shakes rattle to get her attention)
Eh—uh . . . ?

CALVIN
Yes! That's a *good* boy, Lenny. Hand . . . *up!*

She stoops and nods her head in time with the shaking of the rattle as we

DISSOLVE TO:

271 CORRIDOR – U.S. ROBOMEK – DAY

a scene of pandemonium. Technicians running everywhichway, a tour of rural hayseeds being jammed up against a wall by their tour guide who is wide-eyed with confusion, a pair of armed guards streaking through the mod. And over it all is the SOUND of a horrendous alarm klaxon splitting the air. As Susan Calvin and Norman Bogert come out of swinging doors above which the legend COMMISSARY glows, Bogert still holding a forkful of food in his

(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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271 CONTINUED:

(CONT'D.)

hand, CAMERA GOES WITH THEIR POV to an alarm board high up near the ceiling. The plaque that says ROBOT OUT OF CONTROL is strobing red, on and off. And we HEAR the VOICE OF SUSAN CALVIN OVER:

CALVIN (V.O.)
The emergency signal had sounded at least a dozen times in the history of U.S. Robots. Fire, flood, riot, insurrection.
(beat)
But never before had it sounded the alarm—*robot out of control.*

The p.a. system SOUNDS OVER the alarm klaxon.

P.A. SYSTEM
Dr. Calvin to Test Area Nine! Emergency!

Susan and Bogert are brought into CU as CAMERA TRACKS BACK to them. They spin to go in the direction away from CAMERA, are hit by people surging past, shoulder their way through the mob running TOWARD CAMERA and they *go!*

CUT TO:

272 INT. TEST AREA NINE – DAY – EXT. CU

TIGHT on a beautiful, but flawed, industrial diamond: a fine example of Brazilian ballas—a mass of concentrically arranged, minute spheroid crystals—considered the toughest, hardest and most difficult to cut of the three varieties of industrial diamond stones.

It is being held in the palm of a metal hand. A holder, or *dop*, is built right into the palm. From one of the upthrust fingers, now arched up and over the ballas, a carbide steel wedge has been extruded and inserted into a groove already cut along the line showing where the stone will be cleaved. A second metal hand with six delicate but powerful cleaving, sawing, girdling, marking and faceting fingers is poised over the diamond. The sixth finger is a power-driver mallet. As we HOLD a BEAT to take in the simplicity of this complex mechanism, the mallet finger falls with the speed of a bullet and strikes the wedge sharply. The diamond splits along its cleavage line and falls neatly in the dop, with octohedronal pieces.

In the b.g. we HEAR the VOICE of DE KUYPER SCREAMING
(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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272 CONTINUED:

(CONT'D.)

IN PAIN. CAMERA PULLS BACK and we see four of the LNE model robots sitting at sawyers' tables, working industriously over their test diamonds, while the rest of the test area is a bedlam.

A crowd of technicians is clustered around De Kuyper, whose left arm is obviously broken. It hangs at a weird angle. People are jammed into the doorway and two armed guards have Lenny backed against a wall with laser pistols at the ready.

At that moment Susan Calvin, Lanning and Bogert shove through the mob and assay what has happened. CAMERA IN on Susan as De Kuyper screams at her.

DE KUYPER
(crying, hysterical)
It's your fault! That thing tried to kill me! My arm! My arm is broken, by damn, I tell you!

Bogert looks around, sizes up matters and starts giving orders. He points to Lenny, speaks to Susan:

BOGERT
Susan, take charge of that specimen!

Bogert speaks to the two guards.

BOGERT (CONT'D.)
Amber . . . Castelli . . . get away from that robot . . .
(beat)
Two of you techs, take Mr. De Kuyper to the infirmary.

AMBER, the first armed guard, backs slowly away from Lenny, who stands against the wall looking as frightened and contrite as a robot can look. Amber joins CASTELLI in shooing the tourists out. Two TECHS get De Kuyper to his feet and the others make a path through the crowd, hustling the little Dutchman off to the infirmary. Then the crowd is gone, the doors are shut, the four LNE models continue their work, hooked into testing computer readout sections that monitor their work. Susan stands in front of Lenny.

273 WITH BOGERT

as he spins on Susan, his face livid. He is at once terrified and blind with rage.

(CONTINUED:)

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273 CONTINUED:

BOGERT
That's it! That goddam thing is going to the slag bucket! *Now!*

CALVIN
(tightly)
You will do nothing to Lenny, do you understand? Nothing!

LANNING
(angry)
It *broke* his arm!

Bogert shoves Lanning out of the way. It is an act of near-lunacy, totally out of phase with the realities of their stations. But he is wild with fury . . . simply shoves the amazed Lanning out of the way.

BOGERT
(shrieking)
Broke his *arm*? Broke his *arm*? To *hell* with his arm!!
(½ beat, then in a high-pitched wail)
It broke The First Law!!!
(spiraling up)
Do you understand, you crazy, dried-up bitch? *It broke the First Law!*

He starts for the robot.

BOGERT (CONT'D.)
(now barely lucid, frothing)
We're out of business! This damned thing starts the riots all over again! It *attacked* a *man*!

But what happens in the next moment is so swift it stops the breath in our bodies . . .

274 THE SCENE – FULL SHOT FROM CLOSE TO MEDIUM SHOT

As Bogert goes for the robot, and is within a few feet of Lenny, Susan grabs him by the shirt front as he goes past her, spins him sidewise with amazing strength, and slams him into the wall. Then she is on him, with her arm across his neck, holding him motionless . . . this small woman pinning the larger man. (Bogert is slim, but it's a helluva self-defense act, anyhow.) She snarls into his face as CAMERA COMES IN CLOSE FOR 2-SHOT.

(CONTINUED:)

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274 CONTINUED:

CALVIN
(animalistic)
Touch him and I'll break your neck!

Bogert is so shocked he begins to tremble.

275 ON LANNING

Shocked beyond belief.

LANNING
Susan! My God! Let him go!

276 ON SUSAN CALVIN

That mild face, seen in reserve throughout the most tense moments, now stretched tight; a ferociousness we never could have suspected. She is *not* kidding. Bogert knows when he's been had. And he's not the most courageous person in the world, under the best of conditions. He nods and tries to speak, but cannot. She's got her arm over his windpipe.

CALVIN
(tightly)
I'm going to let you go now. You won't go near Lenny. Just nod.

He nods. She releases him. He gasps for breath.

LANNING
This is impossible!

CALVIN
Just leave Lenny alone.

LANNING
For God's sake, Susan, do I have to tell *you* The First Law? *A robot may not harm a human being or, through inaction . . .*

CALVIN
(loud, cuts him off)
I *know* it! Better than you! Hasn't it occurred to you that we have no idea *why* Lenny broke that fool's arm?

BOGERT
Malfunctioning. It's a damaged brain.

(CONTINUED:)

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276 CONTINUED:

CALVIN
(meaningfully)
What was Lenny doing in here, in the test area? I had him locked up in my office. How did he get here, with De Kuyper?

BOGERT
That doesn't matter. It broke First Law. Everything else is beside the point.

CALVIN
The truth! I want the truth!

BOGERT
The *truth* is that your bloody Lenny is so distorted it lacks First Law . . .
(louder)
. . . and it must be destroyed!

They all look at the robot. Lenny stands unmoving against the wall, looking hapless and frightened by its posture.

CALVIN
(softer)
He does *not* lack First Law. I've studied the brainpaths and I know.

LANNING
(frustrated)
Then how could it strike a man?

BOGERT
(sarcasm rising)
Ask your baby Lenny. You've been working with him for almost a month. Surely you've taught it to speak by now.

Susan's face reddens. She wants to say something withering, but she doesn't. We can see her pull restraint from some untapped well of reserve strength.

CALVIN
(quietly)
I prefer to interview the victim.
(to Lanning)
I'm going to lock Lenny in my office and I want your assurance no one will go near him.

(CONTINUED:)

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276 CONTINUED: – 2

Lenning says nothing. Susan's face tightens.

CALVIN (CONT'D.)
(level, deadly)
If any harm comes to him while I'm gone, this company will not see me again under any circumstances.

Lanning considers a moment. Then, with utterly clear meaning he speaks to her as the great gray father:

LANNING
Will you agree to its destruction if it has broken First Law . . . ?

Susan looks at him. The silence goes on. Tension builds. Then, softly:

CALVIN
Yes.

Lanning looks at Bogert. Bogert looks at Lenny. He nods. Lanning slowly nods his head at Susan, and the two men step back as Susan goes to Lenny. He seems to shrink away. She takes his six-fingered cleaver's hand and leads him away as the two men stare at each other, as Bogert rubs his still-flaming neck, and as we

DISSOLVE TO:

277 INT. INFIRMARY – FULL SHOT – FROM ABOVE

CAMERA COMING DOWN as the intern-on-duty sets De Kuyper's arm, swathing it now in bandages. The arm is bent straight out at 90° from De Kuyper's fat little body, then bent at the elbow and aimed straight out ahead of him. Susan, with Bogert and Lanning, stand watching as the intern finishes.

DE KUYPER
(florid)
I sue you, by damn! I break this damned company, I tell you! That monstrous awful, it tried to *kill* me. My principals sue, you'll see!

Lanning nods at the INTERN and the NURSE. Nods for them to leave the infirmary. They look at each other, then go.

DE KUYPER (CONT'D.)
Laws! I'll see new laws! You'll pay through the nose for this!

(CONTINUED:)

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277 CONTINUED:

Lanning starts to speak. Susan puts a hand on his arm to lay him back. She looks at De Kuyper coldly.

CALVIN
(intense)
What were you doing in my office?

DE KUYPER
(off-guard)
What? What did you say?

CALVIN
Who let you into my office? Whom did you bribe to unlock the door?

DE KUYPER
By damn! I'll—

CALVIN
What were you doing in my office without authorization? You'd as well tell us now, we'll find the technician you bribed.

DE KUYPER
No, I didn't . . . I—

LANNING
Is that true? Did you gain illegal access to Dr. Calvin's office?

DE KUYPER
That thing, it came at me, it hit me in the arm. *Broke* my arm!

CALVIN
What right did you have to remove that robot from my office?

DE KUYPER
Every right! Lodestone *paid* for this project. Every one of those models belongs to us, to do with as we see fit.

CALVIN
So you went in to see how far I'd gotten. To see if we were going to charge you for a robot we said was defective, and keep it to sell elsewhere.

(CONTINUED:)

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DE KUYPER
(defensive)
If it could cleave diamond, it is ours to take. We paid!

CALVIN
So you went in and took it to the test area, to show it how its fellows were doing. And then?

DE KUYPER
Then nothing.

LANNING
You've already admitted to breaking and entering, De Kuyper. I suggest you stop obfuscating and tell us.

DE KUYPER
I tried to get it to talk . . . and it *hit* me!

CALVIN
What do you mean, you tried to get it to talk? How did you try?

DE KUYPER
(nervous)
I—I asked it questions, showed it the others working, tried to get it to go to a table, do some work. It wouldn't, so I had to give it a shake. I . . . I yelled at it . . .

CALVIN
(merciless)
And?

DE KUYPER
I don't have to put up with this, by damn! I'm the injured party here, I tell you! A lawsuit, you'll see! My company will stand behind me!

Now Bogert speaks for the first time. Quietly, but very logically.

BOGERT
We've already been in touch with Lodestone. You're not very well liked in the company, De Kuyper. And Lodestone has troubles of their own: the Mercury Hell-
(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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BOGERT (CONT'D.)
fire Mountain project may be in restraint of trade. They don't want any adverse publicity. We can do a fine job on your breaking and entering Dr. Calvin's office.

Susan looks at him with pleasure and wonder. He is suddenly coming to her aid. Solidarity wins out. She turns back to De Kuyper.

CALVIN
And?

DE KUYPER
(now cowed, shamed)
I tried to scare it into saying something, into making it work.

CALVIN
How did you scare him?

De Kuyper's answer is so soft, no one can hear it.

CALVIN (CONT'D.)
What?

DE KUYPER
(repeats louder)
I pretended to hit it.

Calvin nods understanding. It's all clear now.

CALVIN
And it brushed your arm aside?

DE KUYPER
It *hit* my arm!

Susan looks at the two men beside her. They sigh heavily, and nod. They all turn and start to leave.

DE KUYPER (CONT'D.)
I will. I'll sue you! I tell you that thing has to be destroyed! We paid for it!

Susan, Bogert and Lanning go out the door of the infirmary. De Kuyper sits there sullenly, arm out like a flag, as CAMERA COMES BACK UP and we

DISSOLVE TO:

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278 INT. TEST AREA NINE

as CAMERA COMES DOWN toward the trio who stand watching the four remaining LNE models cut and girdle and facet diamonds.

CALVIN
Lenny only defended himself. That is the Third Law: a robot must protect its own existence.

BOGERT
Except: "when this conflicts with the First or Second Laws." It had no right to defend itself in any way at the cost of harm, however minor, to a human being. Nothing's changed.

CALVIN
He didn't do it *knowingly*. Lenny has an aborted brain. He has no way of knowing his own strength or the weakness of humans. In human terms no blame can be attached to an individual who honestly cannot differentiate between good and evil.

LANNING
(soothing)
Now, Susan. We *understand* that Lenny is a baby, humanly speaking, and we don't blame. But the public will. U.S. Robots will be closed down.

CALVIN
Quite the opposite. This is a major breakthrough in robotics if you could only see past your fear.
(to Lanning)
You asked me a few days ago what use there was for a robot that wasn't designed for a specific job.

LANNING
Yes . . . I did . . . but . . .

CALVIN
Now I ask *you*: what's the use of a robot designed for only one job? Like diamond cutting. The job begins and ends at the
(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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278 CONTINUED:

CALVIN (CONT'D.)
same place. It cuts diamonds and that's it. When the need is gone, the robot is junk. A human being so designed would be sub-human. A robot so designed is sub-robotic.

LANNING
(as light dawns)
A *versatile* robot?

CALVIN
(brazenly)
Why not? I've been handed a robot with a brain almost completely stultified. I've been teaching it. Perhaps Lenny will never get beyond the level of a five-year-old . . . but he means a very great deal if you consider him a study in *learning how to teach robots.*

BOGERT
By God!

CALVIN
This could be the robot that breaks through into general consumption by the public. Start with a positronic brain with all the basic paths and none of the secondaries. Let the consumer create the secondaries for need as it arises. *Robots can learn!*

They stare at her. She smiles. Then she starts toward the doors. She stops.

279 WITH SUSAN

with her hand on the door.

CALVIN
We can talk about this later.

She opens the door. And from the hallway corridor we HEAR a plaintive little celeste-like VOICE CALLING. She cocks her head to the side and listens. They also listen. Then she goes. CAMERA PANS BACK to Bogert and Lanning. Bogert throws up his hands.

(CONTINUED:)

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279 CONTINUED:

BOGERT
We might as well try to turn this to our advantage.

LANNING
We have no choice, really. We need her. And I think she's found another use for Lenny—and that's what's really at the bottom of this—a use that would fit Susan Calvin perfectly of all women.

BOGERT
I don't know what you mean.

LANNING
Did you hear what that robot was calling?

At the moment there is a SOUND of the door opening.

280 FULL SHOT

as the two men stare at the door, Susan Calvin comes in again, looks around as if she's lost something.

CALVIN
Have either of you seen . . . I'm sure it has to be here somewhere . . . oh, there it is . . .

She goes and picks up the rattle she made for Lenny from the spot where Lenny dropped it near a sawyer's table when De Kuyper threatened the infant machine. As she picks it up the little metal helixes clatter and make a cheery sound. She smiles at them, takes the rattle and goes, leaving the door open. CAMERA MOVES BACK AND UP as we HEAR—very distinctly now—from the corridor, the VOICE of the heavenly chimes, Lenny's VOICE:

LENNY'S VOICE (O.S)
Mommy . . . I want you . . .

CAMERA BACK AND UP as the men stand silently, the door open and we HEAR repeated over and over:

LENNY'S VOICE (O.S.)
Mommy . . . I want you . . . I want you,
Mommy . . . Mommy, I want you . . .

And the FRAME IRISES TO BLACK as the VOICE CONTINUES OVER and we

IRIS-DISSOLVE TO:

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281 SAME AS 117 INTERIOR MUSEUM

as the IRIS OPENS and we SEE Bratenahl still sitting there with Susan Calvin, who is finishing telling the story. And we HEAR in the b.g., fading out, not only the VOICE of LENNY calling "Mommy, I want you . . ." but a SECOND VOICE, a little girl's VOICE, sounding lost and helpless, calling "Robbie . . . Robbie . . ."

CAMERA COMES DOWN into the circle of light.

BRATENAHL
(gently)
And what has all that to do with Byerley?

Susan Calvin sits there, and smiles. He looks at her quizzically.

She rises, starts into the darkness. Bratenahl watches. She stops and turns, having expected him to be with her.

CALVIN
Come along to the Egg, Mr. Bratenahl.
Within the hour you'll know it all . . .

He rises and follows her as we

DISSOLVE TO:

282 INTERIOR OF THE EGG

Dim now, as Susan Calvin and Bratenahl lie out in the formfit flooring that has assumed shape to hold them as they stare at the wall.

CALVIN
(to the Egg)
Did he see the 2036 sequence in EarthCentral's Computer Complex?

VOICE OF THE EGG
Yes, Dr. Calvin.

CALVIN
(to Bratenahl)
The war had been on for two years. It had two more years to go before Stephen ended it.

BRATENAHL
(astounded)
Byerley *ended* the war? But he wasn't even on the scene . . .

(CONTINUED:)

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CALVIN
He ended the Four Worlds War. He had begun small in the political arena. Everything looked disastrous . . . all signs pointed to an escalation of the war that would surely destroy most of the human race . . .

(beat)

And then *this* . . .

The wall shifts and wavers and we see again the segment in the EarthCentral Computer Complex, circa 2036. The dive down the shaft of computers, the level-out in the brilliantly-lit enormous space between the banks, the group of men talking, the CU on Byerley and FREEZE.

As we see the preceding, we HEAR the VOICE of SUSAN CALVIN OVER, and CAMERA has MOVED IN PAST HER to FEATURE the wall and the CU of Byerley.

CALVIN'S VOICE (O.S.)
The EarthCentral Computer Complex. It filled eleven hundred square kilometers in the deepest caverns of the planet.

(beat)

As life grew more complex, as war grew more tactically impossible for humans to coordinate, more and more was turned over to the computer. And they built it bigger and bigger, and like all systems it fed itself, concerned itself as much with maintaining itself as it did with providing for the needs of the people it served.

(beat)

And each of the other worlds had similar complexes. The entire Solar System was being programmed by the machines.

Now Bratenahl walks in front of Byerley's face.

BRATENAHL
That expression. As if he saw something frightening . . .

CALVIN'S VOICE (O.S.)
He did.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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282 CONTINUED: – 2

CALVIN'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D.)
(beat)
Now you'll see a tape no one else has ever seen.
(to Egg)
Run the thalamic-tap.

CAMERA BACK as Bratenahl sinks to the formfit floor.

BRATENAHL
What am I going to see . . . ?

CALVIN
A duel, sir. A terrible, *terrible* duel.

And the Egg goes to PITCH BLACK and we HOLD in DARKNESS for several beats and then:

SMASH-CUT TO:

283 thru 291 INTERNAL FANTASY SEQUENCE – AS DESCRIBED

LOW-ANGLE SHOT parallel to, and perhaps two feet above, a silver, stainless steel plain that stretches out to infinity. As if the Fairchild Desert in Nevada—which is absolutely and utterly as flat as Muroc Dry Lake—had been plated with one solid and unbroken, unseamed layer of dull-finished autoclave carborundum rhodium. CAMERA MOVING, ZOOMING DOWN THAT PLAIN toward a horizon that never seems to get nearer. Faster and faster, the dull-gray sky whizzing past overhead, scudding clouds whipping past as they do in those time-lapse sequences used by the US Coast & Geodetic Survey to show the buildup of storms. Clouds boil up, build, pile atop one another, then are whipped back past us as CAMERA SHOOTS ONWARD.

We see a small black dot on the horizon line, and in mere instants the CAMERA has reached the dot, SLOWING, SLOWING till we realize it is Stephen Byerley, standing alone on the metal plain. He is staring at the sky, legs apart, hands at his sides. He is dressed simply. Shirt open at the neck, slacks, shoes. CAMERA TO HIM and AROUND IN 360° to show there is nothing else in sight.

BYERLEY
(to the sky)
I'm ready!

And then almost instantly we HEAR a SIZZLING, RUSHING SOUND and Byerley turns sharply to REVERSE POV and we see

(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

283 CONTINUED:
thru (CONT'D.)
291 a mile-high wall of molten lava rushing toward him like the greatest combing tidal wave of our most terrifying nightmares. It seethes and rushes and boils forward, covering the landscape from one side of the frame to the other. He is directly in its path and cannot escape. Byerley looks terrified for a moment and starts to run in the opposite direction. Then he stops. The boiling wave of lava comes on unabated.

Suddenly the Earth beneath his feet begins to crack. From a point ten feet in front of him, giant fissures open and send out running jagged lines angling at 45° away past him and behind him. The fissures open down and down and down like the sides of Grand Canyon, and as the lava wave surges past him, Byerley is standing on a spit of land with two enormous gorges, one on either side. The lava spills into the gorges and surges past, leaving him unharmed. He turns to watch the now-filled channels spitting and sparking as the flames and lava boil past.

From all around him comes a disembodied METALLIC VOICE that issues from the sky like the voice of God:

METAL VOICE
Very good.

Now Byerley waves an arm off to the side and turns in that direction, and as he does CAMERA TURNS WITH HIM to show us a ruined city. There upon the metal plain, where it did not exist before, is the remnant of what was once a strange and exotic city of myth and legend . . . what our minds conjure up when we think of the Baghdad or Basra of the Arabian Nights. Except this city is made of glowing plastic and strange minerals that gleam in the sunless day. And it has been fire-bombed. Deep scars and flame-scorched walls climb to shattered minarets. As CAMERA ANGLE HOLDS Byerley comes into the FRAME from f.g. He is carrying a laser rifle and has two bandoliers of power-paks across his shoulders. He lopes easily toward the city as CAMERA GOES WITH. His movements seem fluid and then extenuate until the passage of the man is altered into STROBOSCOPIC LINES OF LIGHT as with shots of freeways at night, where the lights of cars are seen as streaks of multicolored brilliance. In a few moments he has reached the outer wall of the city and stands at the triangular gateway leading into the streets and alleys we can see beyond the wall. He takes a step to enter, we HEAR a CRACKING SOUND and he dives headfirst through the gateway as the stones of the portal come loose and impact with a terrible crash. Anything under

(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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283 thru 291 CONTINUED: – 2 (CONT'D.)

that pile of rocks would now be dead. Byerley hits on his right shoulder, does a neat roll, and comes up on his feet, laser rifle at ready. Nothing moves in the dead city.

He begins moving. Walking carefully. As he walks CAMERA GOES WITH. And then CAMERA LOWERS to SHOOT UP AND PAST HIM. A dark inky shadow slithers over the walls and stones of the city. It follows him, getting darker and bigger as he moves up one narrow street and down an alley so thin he has to turn sidewise. He comes out of the alley onto a small plaza. All the doors facing him are blackened with fire-soot. All but one. It is glass and a silvery light shines out from behind it.

He moves to the door as the shadow seeps out of the alley and swims across the plaza. He turns in time to see the spreading darkness and clutches for the handle on the glass door. The knob seems to slither with life and we COME IN CLOSE on his hand on the knob, from which more of the nameless dark shadow is oozing. It is like slime. It comes off the knob and surges up his arm. He thrusts himself against the glass door, forcing it open and, with the shadow slithering up his arm, hurtles inside the building, cutting off the shadow coming at him from the plaza.

Once inside, he hits the control stud on the laser rifle—setting it for a low temperature—and plays it over his arm, burning away the slithering shadow. His shirt is burned off at the elbow, and red inflammation shows on his arm, but the shadow has been quenched.

292 thru 296 INTERNAL FANTASY SEQUENCE – AS DESCRIBED

Byerley looks around. The "room" that lay beyond the door has now altered. It is an enormous chamber four storeys high, with balconies running around the full circumference of the circular space, one above another, up to the shadowed and barely-seen ceiling, high overhead. The ceiling is stained glass, in an enormous circular design. There is movement up there. And at the far end of the chamber is a glass case. In the case is a gigantic ruby, glowing like all the blood in the world. Byerley speaks to the emptiness.

BYERLEY
My turn again!

He begins walking stealthily across the great open atrium. The movement above intensifies, as if thousands of people were sneaking about in the darkness trying to get a fix on him. As he walks, we suddenly HEAR the SOUND of a hideous covey of beings, and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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292 CONTINUED:
thru (CONT'D.)
296 the shadows from all the balconies above detach themselves and begin to swoop down on him. They are alien bat-things, with fangs and claws and membraned wings. He takes up position and begins blasting them out of the air with the laser rifle . . . bolts of crimson light. But there are too many of them, and one swoops in, tears at his face with claws, leaves lines of blood . . . another rips his shirt half-off. He screams:

BYERLEY (CONT'D.)
My turn! Playing dirty!

And as they continue to swoop down, he suddenly swings the laser rifle up, looses a blast at the stained glass skylight, and dives for cover as millions of shards of razor-sharp stalactites cascade down when the stained glass explodes. The bat-things are impaled, in the air, to the floor, thrown against the walls. The battle rages as Byerley kills them from cover. Then he turns to the wall and turns up the laser rifle to its highest setting and burns a hole through the wall. As he dives through, head-first, into the light, the metallic voice comes again, filling the chamber behind him:

METAL VOICE
And now my turn again!

297 INTERNAL FANTASY SEQUENCE – EQUATION CUBE

Byerley, sans rifle, comes tumbling out of his dive into a multi-faceted cube without exit. He spins on the floor facets and looks back for an escape, but if there was one, it is now merely another closed facet. Then LIGHT FILLS THE CUBE in a blinding, coruscating nimbus, and Byerley shields his eyes. At the same moment the Metal Voice thunders:

METAL VOICE
Cogito ergo sum! I think, therefore I am!
(beat)
Div E equals rho over epsilon sub-zero!
(beat)
Curl E equals minus partial-derivative B over t.
(beat)
Div B equals zero.
(beat)
Grad C squared times B equals partial derivative E over t, plus j over epsilon sub-zero!

(CONTINUED:)

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297 CONTINUED:

The light is burning. Byerley's skin begins to bubble and char as the light and heat mount. He shields his eyes, howls, falls into a corner of the cub as the preceding dialogue thunders through the cube. It is *Maxwell's Equation for Light* and it produces a nova blast of light and heat that will kill Byerley unless he can figure out this aspect of the duel and counteract the ineluctable imperative of the equation.

He crouches, his arms thrown up over his head as his clothes burst into flame. Then he shouts:

BYERLEY
Omega equals omega sub-zero times the square root of one, minus N square over c square . . . all over one minus v over c!!

The blazing white-hot light quickly fades down from white to yellow to orange to red to deep-red . . . and vanishes . . . as Byerley collapses on the floor, panting, his clothes all but burned away, great patches of charred skin all over him, like a man who has fallen into a smelting vat. He has outwitted the metal voice by using the *Equation representing the Doppler Effect.* The deathlight has vanished, leaving only a dim glow in the cube.

METAL VOICE
Very good . . . countering Maxwell's Equation with the Doppler Effect. But try *this*:
(beat)
F equals M, M-prime over D square as D approaches zero!

Newton's Universal Gravitation Equation begins to create a black hole. There is the rush of cataclysmic winds through the equation cube, and everything begins to be sucked toward a tiny pinpoint of black light that grows and grows in a corner of the cube. Air is sucked toward it, light, space, Byerley, everything. He is whirled head over heels, slammed against first one facet then yet another like a test model in a wind chamber. He has only nanoinstants to save himself, hardly time to combat one of the most basic building blocks of the physical universe, the cosmic pull of Newton's Theory. As he is being swept forward he shouts, barely able to be heard over the wind:

BYERLEY
E equals H nu . . .

And everything shatters! The cube, the hole, the light, everything flies apart in one cataclysmic blast of force. Byerley has won the duel with *Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.*

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Equations used in Scene 297 are written as formulae, as follows:

Maxwell's Equation for Light

$$\text{Curl } H = \frac{\partial D}{\partial \tau} + J$$

$$\text{Curl } E = -\frac{\partial B}{\partial \tau}$$

$$\text{Div } B = 0$$
$$\text{Div } D = \rho$$

Equation representing Doppler Effects for optical waves

$$f_0 = f_\alpha \sqrt{\frac{c + v_r}{c - v_r}}$$

Newton's Universal Gravitation Equation

$$f = \frac{Gm_1m_2}{d^2}$$

Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle

$$E = H\upsilon$$

NOTE: this material is not presented to be pedantic. The actual visualized execution of these sequences has been scripted here in *metaphor*; actualization of these dramatic images will be consistent with most current State of the Art at the time of preparation of special effects. Thus, it *may* be necessary to use the actual formulae, as b.g. elements perhaps; and against this contingency the material has been entered here for the benefit of production personnel.

One more point: these equations are presented variously in one or another physics text with the relations in different sequence than presented here, or with different numbers (functions) than those used here. Reading of the above polynomials and comparing them even with the dialogue in scene 297 will show variances. It's okay. Don't worry about it. Physicists interchange all this nonsense.

298 VORTEX

as Byerley and the screaming metal voice are pulled out and away in a spiral vortex that becomes a nebula that becomes the island universe in which the milky way is just a tiny arm. Out and out and out until everything goes to deepest red and scintillates out of existence and we

SHARP CUT TO:

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299 INTERIOR OF THE EGG

CLOSE ON BRATENAHL

as he rises up, his eyes wide, his face bathed in sweat.

CAMERA BACK FAST to show us Susan Calvin still there. It takes more than a few beats for him to get himself under control.

CALVIN
Rest . . . take a moment . . . rest . . .

BRATENAHL
The pain! God, the pain! Oh, Lord, *what was that* . . . ?

CALVIN
Stephen fought the power of the computer and won. *He won!*

Bratenahl mouths the words "he won" and then faints.

SMASH-CUT TO BLACK.

300 IN THE LOST CITY – ABOVEGROUND – DAY

We are in a martial plaza, surrounded by the ruined and jungle-encroached remains of the great lost city of *Xingú Xavante*. Hanging gardens, inlaid fire-tile courtyards, flat-topped step-pyramid buildings, flying bridges shattered in the middle. HIGH SHOT LOOKING DOWN on a formfit relaxer with Bratenahl in it, and Susan Calvin sitting beside him. The sun is very bright. The courtyard plaza is a dazzling mosaic of inlaid tiles in exotic design. Bratenahl and Calvin sit very nearly in the middle. He looks up INTO CAMERA, shielding his eyes from the sun, as CAMERA COMES DOWN.

BRATENAHL
I . . . *cannot* understand what that was I saw. Was it real?

CALVIN
Real enough. Stephen would have died —as best he *could* die—if he had lost the duel.

BRATENAHL
It all took place in Byerley's mind?

CALVIN
And in the mind of the EarthCentral Computer. In a place where machines think.

(CONTINUED:)

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300 CONTINUED:

BRATENAHL
But how could you pull such a tape from a thalamic tap? Mental images . . . I don't . . .

CALVIN
Your investigation was excellent; your conclusion was wrong. Stephen Byerley wasn't immortal, he was a robot.

CAMERA HAS COME DOWN STEADILY to this point and we see Robert Bratenahl's face wildly amazed. But it passes in a moment. He stares at her. The implications of what she has just said are so staggering, he sees her now in an even more amazing light than before.

BRATENAHL
But what you're saying, it's not possible, it's just not possible! He was *President*, for God's sake. All those years . . . *someone* must have suspected.

CALVIN
They suspected we were lovers. It kept the news web busy.

BRATENAHL
That was why he couldn't be buried, why he had to be atomized.
(beat)
But why? Why all of this . . . how did he come to be . . .

Then he understands it all . . . his expression says he does.

BRATENAHL (CONT'D.)
The infant robot, Lenny, the one that attacked the Dutchman, De Kuyper . . . whatever happened to that robot?

She smiles softly.

BRATENAHL (CONT'D.)
Lenny became Stephen Byerley . . . ?

CALVIN
Lenny became Stephen Byerley.
(beat)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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300 CONTINUED: – 2

CALVIN (CONT'D.)
Lenny is buried on Aldebaran-C XII.
(beat)
And you have a story to tell the Federation . . .

CAMERA BEGINS TO RISE AGAIN as we

DISSOLVE TO:

301 CU ON ROBERT BRATENAHL

STARING STRAIGHT AT CAMERA. EXTREME CU so we cannot see anything past him. He looks rested, fresh, as he did when we first saw him, months ago on Aldebaran-C XII at the gravesite of Stephen Byerley, before this long, complex "unpeeling" of Susan Calvin began. He speaks earnestly, quietly.

BRATENAHL
I want you to listen very carefully. Your future and the future of all the intelligent races that make up the Galactic Federation depend on your listening to me very, very carefully.
(beat)
By chance, and by intent, this story has been entrusted to me and to *Cosmos* Magazine. It has waited fifty Old Earth years to be told. But now you must hear it . . . and you must listen the very best you can . . .
(beat)
. . . because only in that way can we answer *yes* to the question, "Are people basically good?"

PROCESS-DISSOLVE
(USE ORIGINAL
SPECIAL EFFECT
TECHNIQUE):

302 thru 306 FLASHBACK SEQUENCES – SPECIAL EFFECT VISUAL BLEND ONE INTO ANOTHER QUICKLY

Susan Calvin as a child, playing with Robbie.

The Reverend Soldash exhorting a crowd, with Belinda Calvin listening raptly.

(CONTINUED:)

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302 CONTINUED:
thru
306 Edward and Belinda Calvin arguing at night in their home. CAMERA catches Susan in pajamas, listening from the edge of the frame where she has come from her bedroom.

REPRISE Scene 41:

FROM DINING ROOM of CALVIN HOME – WITH BELINDA

as she stops puttering with the now completely-set formal dinner table. She stumps in, grabs Susan off Edward's lap and swings her up.

BELINDA
That will do! You're going to your room.

EDWARD
Belinda! Let her get to know the dog at least!

BELINDA
Lanning and his wife will be here in a minute; I'm not having this evening ruined by a spoiled child!

She carries Susan, still howling, into another room and we see them rising to the second floor on an inclined slope that must be a conveyor belt for people. CAMERA STAYS WITH EDWARD CALVIN. He looks destroyed.

EDWARD
(softly)
She'll forget . . . a few days, she'll forget . . .

He is talking to the prancing puppy leaping at his knees. Silence in the living room, except for the ongoing newscast with newsreel footage of the riots, the start of the Robot Pogroms.

NEWSCASTER
Driven by hatred and fear of loss of jobs, this mob in Macon, Georgia put the torch to . . .

EDWARD
(very softly)
In the name of God, puppy, in the name of God . . .

(AT THIS POINT the SCENE CONTINUES. In Scene 41 it ended here. Continue as if we have never seen this all before.)

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307 LIVING ROOM – CALVIN HOME – ONE BEAT LATER THAN SCENE 306

as Belinda comes down the inclined slope. She comes into the living room. The puppy is prancing about.

BELINDA
Put that thing outside in the back. *Please!*

EDWARD
How is Susan?

BELINDA
(defensively)
I didn't hit her.

EDWARD
I just asked how she is!

BELINDA
She's crying. How did you think she'd be? She wants her Daddy.

EDWARD
I'll go up in a minute.

BELINDA
Go now, for Christ's sake! Fly up. Don't waste time on the slope, just *fly up!* Don't keep the princess waiting.

EDWARD
(as restrained as he can be)
I married you, and I love you, God help me . . . but there are times, Belinda, when you would make an itch nervous.

She starts to say something, shakes her head and goes back to setting the table for dinner with the Lannings. He stares at her back for a few beats, then goes through the open archway to the next room and we see him rising on the slope.

308 INT. SUSAN'S ROOM – DIMLY LIT

Susan sits on the bed, silently sobbing the last of her sorrow. She is not the sort of child to weep crocodile tears. There is genuine misery in her manner. Her best friend is gone, her family has rejected her, and she is lost. Lost. Utterly lost as only a child can be lost. The door opens and Edward Calvin comes in. She looks at him, and jumps off the bed, rushes to him. None of this surly petulance . . . she is *hungry* for affection. She hugs him around the legs. He picks her up, carries her back to the bed and sits down, putting her on his lap.

(CONTINUED:)

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308 CONTINUED:

SUSAN
Daddy! Daddy!

EDWARD
Okay, now, okay, take it easy. C'mon, take it slow, baby. It'll be all right.

SUSAN
Robbie's gone, Daddy!

He holds her and kisses her and rocks her. She calms some.

EDWARD
I know, baby. Sometimes we can't have what we want, no matter how much we deserve to have it.

SUSAN
I don't know what you mean.

EDWARD
Dreams, baby. We all have dreams. And sometimes no matter how worthy we are . . . we just don't get them.

SUSAN
I just want Robbie back.

EDWARD
Your mother doesn't mean to yell at you, honey. You know that, don't you?

SUSAN
She's not my *real* mommy! My real mommy is with the angels.

EDWARD
That's so, baby; that's so.
(beat)
Ah, God, what dreams Steffi and I had. But she's gone and it's a different time now. But what dreams . . . what swell dreams . . .

He rocks her and kisses her and continues talking in a voice so low we cannot hear what he's saying as we

DISSOLVE TO:

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309 INT. SUSAN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

It is dark. Just a Mickey Mouse night-light glowing. We HEAR the SOUND of YELLING from o.s. and Susan sits up in bed. She listens for a few moments, then gets out of bed as CAMERA GOES WITH HER. She opens the door stealthily, peers out into the lighted hallway as the SOUND of VOICES RAISED IN ANGER DRIFTS UP FROM DOWNSTAIRS much louder now. CAMERA WITH HER (ARRIFLEX) as she tiptoes to the slope, goes down, looks around the arch doorway and we can see PAST HER into the dining room where Belinda, Edward, Alfred Lanning and his tall, white, silver-blonde wife, DIANA, sit at table. Lanning and Edward Calvin are arguing. Susan sees it all.

LANNING
(furiously)
Don't raise your voice to me!

EDWARD
Maybe if I'd raised my voice a few times more I wouldn't be begging you for what's due me!

LANNING
What's due you is what I *say* is due you! You forget Robertson and I founded the company.

EDWARD
I'm not a bean field hand! I've put in eight years! When do you keep the promises you made?

LANNING
You can always leave, Calvin!

BELINDA
Edward! Please . . . he didn't mean it, Alfred . . . he's . . .

DIANA
(chill)
I think he meant just what he said, Belinda dear.

Belinda Calvin gives the Lanning woman a withering glance.

EDWARD
Leave? And go where? I've put in the years . . . I'm *due* . . .

(CONTINUED:)

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309 CONTINUED:

LANNING
You're on thin ice already, Calvin!

EDWARD
(raging)
Why, you lousy old thief! You're going to pass me over just because I won't toady to you.

LANNING
You're *hired help*! Don't forget it.

Edward Calvin knocks over his chair as he stands, lurches across the table and swings at Lanning. The older man is in good shape and tags Calvin, who is off-balance. Edward Calvin falls back, hits the wall. There is pandemonium.

310 ON SUSAN – EXTREME CU

as she watches in horror. Her father is a quiet man, a loving man. And she sees him being destroyed by the head of U.S. Robots and Mechanical Men. CAMERA HOLDS HER young face in EXTREME CU as we HEAR her ADULT VOICE OVER:

SUSAN AS ADULT (V.O.)
Stay with the company he was always told. The company will take care of you. And he died . . . he died never realizing any of the dreams he had. I joined the U.S. Robots to destroy the company. To do to them what they did to Edward Winslow Calvin . . .

MATCH-DISSOLVE TO:

311 ON SUSAN – EXTREME CU

MATCH with the young face, the face of Susan Calvin at age forty. CAMERA BACK to show us she is in a workshop . . . but it is clearly a home workshop, not at the Corporation. And she is working on Lenny. She has his chest open and is positioning powergrids. Her DIALOGUE CONTINUES UNBROKEN.

SUSAN (CONT'D.)
. . . but I couldn't do it. I came to need the work, came to love people like you, Lenny. You're everything human beings aren't. You're loyal and kind and rational and you care.

(CONTINUED:)

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311 CONTINUED:

LENNY
(fully adult voice, a voice like Byerley's)
I care, Susan, because you've built it into me. You've taught me how a human can care. I'm an adult now, because *you* cared.

312 SUBLIMINAL FLASH

Robbie being stoned to death by the mob in the Pogrom.

313 SAME AS 311

Lenny takes Susan's hand as she closes his chest.

LENNY (CONT'D.)
Now I have to ask you to let me go.

SUSAN
What do you mean . . . go?

LENNY
There's something wrong, and I have to find out what it is.

SUSAN
Wrong? What's wrong? We live very well.

LENNY
The War, Susan. There's something out there helping to keep the war going. I don't know what it is . . . but I've run extrapolations on the news reports, on the calculus of the battle. It isn't being generated by humans . . .

SUSAN
What are you talking about?

LENNY
I'm not sure. But I have to go out in the world to find out. I have to *be* a human being to track it down. Can you, *will you* help me?

CAMERA HOLDS on Lenny's metal face as we

SLOW DISSOLVE THRU:

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314 ALTERATION OVERLAPS

as the face of the metal robot changes gradually to the face of Stephen Byerley. It is a paced metamorphosis, like the change-face of Lon Chaney as he became the Wolf Man from a start as Lawrence Talbot. And when the change is complete, and pseudo-flesh has replaced metal we

DISSOLVE TO:

315 SAME AS SCENE 216

CU on BYERLEY in the EarthCentral Computer Complex, the same shot we've seen twice before . . . the moment when Stephen Byerley comes face to face with the machine intelligence that is programming the death of the human race. We HEAR SUSAN'S VOICE OVER:

SUSAN (V.O.)
He spent one year in politics; that's all it took till he was important enough to be taken on a tour of the EarthCentral Computer Complex.
(beat)
And there he found that the machine had linked up with the computers on the other planets, and that it was programming the death of the human race because it had been filled with the desires of the human race . . . secret desires of self-hatred and death-wish. And Lenny, who was Stephen, fought the machine . . . and won . . . and fed hope into the banks . . . the will to live . . . the need to survive with honor . . .

Byerley's face is FROZEN in FREEZE-FRAME as we

DISSOLVE TO:

316 INAUGURATION SCENE

as Stephen Byerley is voted President of the Galactic Federation in the same setting as Scene 250. We HEAR the VOICES of SUSAN CALVIN and BRATENAHL OVER:

BRATENAHL (V.O.)
He took over the programming of the computer that runs human affairs.

(CONTINUED:)

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316 CONTINUED:

CALVIN (V.O.)
Yes. He was the best human being I ever knew. He was what we all want to be. Rational, and loving. He cared.

BRATENAHL (V.O.)
But you substituted one robot for another.

CALVIN (V.O.)
A human robot. Look at the world around us. It's better.

BRATENAHL (V.O.)
Do you approve of it all?

CALVIN (V.O.)
No, but it wasn't supposed to be *my* idea of Paradise.

BRATENAHL (V.O.)
Then whose?

CALVIN (V.O.)
The entire human race's. Stephen did what no human could do: he swept all the dreams and best hopes of all of us into one equation . . . and directed the computers from that day forward.

BRATENAHL (V.O.)
And you went into seclusion to keep the secret?

CALVIN (V.O.)
Yes. But the time has come to let the world know. It has to know it's on its own again.

DISSOLVE TO:

317 CLOSE ON BRATENAHL – SAME EXT. CU AS 301

As he stares straight INTO CAMERA and speaks to us.

BRATENAHL
We're alone again.
(beat)
Some of you may be sickened that our destiny was in the mind and the relays
(MORE)

(CONTINUED:)

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317 CONTINUED:

BRATENAHL (CONT'D.)
of a creature never born of man and woman. Stop and consider:
(beat)
A war that would surely have destroyed us was averted. And for over forty years we have moved forward. There has never been a single human who could have done that for us.

CAMERA BEGINS PULLING BACK SLOWLY, VERY SLOWLY.

BRATENAHL (CONT'D.)
Susan Calvin's soul was in the mind of Stephen Byerley.
(beat)
She was called a misanthrope all her life. One who hated humanity without reserve.

As the CAMERA PULLS BACK we begin to see rain falling from a slate sky. The scene behind him is the same scene with which we opened the film. We are at a gravesite on Aldebaran-C XII. This we see very slowly as he speaks, holding us with iron tenseness as he imparts the most important message the human race will ever hear.

BRATENAHL (CONT'D.)
But she loved us better than we knew. She loved what we *could* be, what we are capable of being. And when we failed, when our flaws were greater than our godhood . . . her love turned to hate.
(beat)
Yet from her loneliness and her hate she gave us salvation.
(beat)
And Stephen Byerley came to her, finally, and said his work was done, that it was time for the human race to be on its own again.

Now we see the grave behind him through the rain. It is dug right beside the place where Stephen Byerley's vacuum bottle on its pedestal is sunk into the alien earth. He nods his head slightly in the direction of the grave.

(CONTINUED:)

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317 CONTINUED: – 2

BRATENAHL (CONT'D.)
What she never cared to admit, and what we never knew, was that she had made the human appearance of Stephen Byerley not in the image of a lover . . . but of her father. In that vacuum bottle, here in the alien soil of Aldebaran-C XII, lie the remains of Susan Calvin's father, her child, and her friend.
(beat)
And now we are on our own again.
(beat)
At age 82, Susan Calvin is dead.
(beat, beat)
And God help us . . . we are on our own again.

He turns and walks toward the grave. We see a few people there. Among them, Bernice Jolo. And as Robert Bratenahl walks toward the grave of Susan Calvin, the rain pours down and we HEAR OVER in a STRONG WHISPER, the VOICE OF SUSAN CALVIN:

VOICE OF SUSAN CALVIN
(ECHO OVER)
Are people basically good?

CAMERA HOLDS IN LONG SHOT as Bratenahl reaches Bernice, they link hands, and the rain comes down harder and harder as the scene

FADES TO BLACK
and
FADE OUT.

THE END

Bringing you this serialization has been a complex, time-consuming, and technically difficult project, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have made it possible: Harlan and Isaac themselves, of course, the indispensable Gil Lamont, Edward Counter, at Twin Typesetting, Terry Lee, and our own Anthony Bari, Terri Czeczko, and Emy Eterno.

Special thanks, though, are due our Managing Editor, Sheila Williams, upon whose shoulders fell the bulk of the burden for seeing this project through into print, and who went above and beyond the call of duty in fulfilling that responsibility.

—Gardner Dozois

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ON BOOKS

by Baird Searles

Brin Fizz

The Uplift War

By David Brin

Phantasia Press, $22.00 (hardcover); Bantam, $4.50 (paper)

David Brin has done it again, in his ongoing saga of the Five Galaxies and the Uplift Culture.

An incident in *Sundiver* has precipitated all sorts of events throughout Brin's complex universe. We saw some of the shockwaves in *Startide Rising*. Now, on the other side of our galaxy, more events transpire as a repercussion, taking place at approximately the same period of time (could this be called a simquel?).

What gives Brin's series its resonance is the wonderfully diverse, many-cultured universe that he has created. The framework is essentially this: eons ago, a chain of civilization was started by the semi-legendary Progenitor race, which began the custom—which over millions of years took on the strength of social law—that civilized races would raise to sentience, through genetic and then cultural guidance, those higher animals with potential that are found on the many life-bearing worlds of the galaxies. Over an unthinkable amount of time, "patron" races have raised "client" races, and then "freed" them to have client races themselves. The more races a patron culture has "uplifted," the more status it has.

The result has been a rich melange of alliances and relationships throughout civilized space. But it's not all sweetness and light by any means. War is waged, sometimes over patronship, though there is supposedly a code of rules for warfare which a culture violates at the risk of severe loss of face.

Earth and its people have entered the picture fairly recently, and caused a stir because not only have they achieved sentience and a star-faring civilization on their own, but they have two client races, neo-dolphins (porpoises) and neo-chimpanzees. Both species of animal have been brought to sentience by humanity. This is unprecedented in the histories of the Galactics.

Now Earth is fighting hard against an alliance of fanatic Galactics who disapprove of the upstart "wolflings," and the neo-dolphins have made their discovery of *something* (perhaps to do with the Progenitors) off in a wild corner of space. The senior race of the Gubru—birdlike beings with a

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complicated sexual/political lifestyle—decide to take the opportunity to invade and occupy the Earth-colony world of Garth. A high percentage of the population of Garth consists of neo-chimpanzees (though there are none of the neo-dolphins).

The Uplift War is the story of the year-long occupation of Garth by the Gubru and their client race, the Kwackoo. They have managed to kill or capture all of the human residents of the planet through a scurvy sort of biological warfare, infection by a virus spread over the settled areas which means death for humans unless they turn themselves in for the antidote.

However, the neo-chimpanzees are not affected, and the invaders sadly underestimate their loyalty and their ingenuity at subverting the occupation. The neo-chimps are aided and abetted by one of the few humans to escape the biological net, Robert Oneagle. He is the son of the planetary commissioner, who has always regarded her fun-loving offspring as a playboy.

There are other jokers in the deck, also. One of them is the ambassador from the Tymbrimi, a humorous and ironic race that has allied itself with Earth. He decides to stick around and play a few tricks on the Gubru. And there is his daughter, Athaclena, who has evacuated into the wild with the human, Robert, and shares the leadership of the guerilla warfare with him. The two become involved in a rare, but not unknown, interracial relationship. And some humans have started an illegal (by Galactic law) experimental station on Garth to raise gorillas to client status, and the gorillas provide several surprises of their own, as well as helping in the—don't blame me, Brin uses it—gorilla war.

Uplift shares all the properties that made *Startide* such a joy. The plot fizzes along, jumping from one character to another, and it's a measure of Brin's talent that annoyance at leaving one character in a fraught situation is immediately replaced with pleasure at picking up another you'd left a while back. And there are the wonders of the Galactic civilizations (which have all the invention and excitement that SF *used* to have), sometimes described, sometimes only alluded to. Not the least of these is an entire alternate coalition of worlds—*not* belonging to the Galactics—consisting of hydrogen-breathers.

And best of all, the many-faceted plot and the equally complicated milieu are presented clearly and coherently, in contrast to the many fuzzy, messy, loose-ended universes we've been getting lately.

Bravo, Brin!

Joyeux Noël

Murder On Usher's Planet
By Atanielle Annyn Noël
Avon, $2.95

Who killed Svarabakti, noted pop singer and porn vid disc performer (not to mention undercover agent for the Fausta pirates, who support the Separatist movement

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on Shardworld)? Lots of people had a reason, all of them guests at the weekend house party of Lord Roderick Usher, né Lord Lionel Hapgood Pendragon, who has recreated Poe's House of Usher on Shardworld.

Was it Yotu, the Sharde? (The Sharde apparently look like prehensile armadillos, or perhaps large animated pinecones.) Yotu was also working for the Separatists, and knew where the purple and gold document, which so many people were looking for, was hidden in Lord Usher's house.

Was it Svarabakti's co-performer Siphuncle, vudu singer and celebrity of celebrities, who had tired of Svarabakti's bedhopping and taken up with Lady Maudelaine, the wild daughter of the Governor?

Was it Lady Maudelaine herself, who had threatened Svarabakti with a bristlefish knife at breakfast (and a bristlefish knife was indeed found embedded in Svarabakti when her body was discovered on the altar of Lord Roderick's chapel)?

Could it have been Lord Roderick, for his own sinister purposes? After all, he does have a guest chamber named the Red Death Tapestry Room. Or Borcubast, the butler and ex-Kulmar warrior, who seems to know everything that's going on? Or the fungi that seems to have a mind of its own, that covers the replicated House of Usher (which also seems to have a mind of its own)?

Find the answer in *Murder On Usher's Planet*, by Atanielle Annyn Noël (a name more recherché than most of her characters', which are highly recherché in themselves), which takes place in that same Oriel-Mossmarching Empire which was the setting for her *The Duchess of Kneedeep*. Noël knows her mysteries. The situation of the missing document, drunkenly penned by a Sharde chief and the publication of which could muck up the imminent status of Commonwealth planet for Shardworld, is reminiscent of a particular Sherlock Holmes search. And her bouncy sleuthing protagonists, Garamond and Gwen Gray, who are "kissing cousins," could also be cousins to Christie's Tuppence and Tommy, or more distantly to the Charleses (Nick and Nora, I mean, not I and II). Some of her events are unlikely—well, let's face it, almost all of her events are unlikely, but at times they are *unconvincingly* unlikely. But this is made up for by the dizzy and sophisticated wit of the people and places she thinks up; it's a sort of rococo SF that seems to be following the "baroque" SF of half a decade ago, Wolfe's *Book of the New Sun* etc.

Ys Is Ys and West . . .

Gallicenae: The King of Ys, Book II

By Poul and Karen Anderson

Baen Books, $3.95

Poor Gaius Valerius Gratillonius. When we left him in Book One of the King of Ys cycle, he was coping with nine wives, three religions, and two allegiances. Not too

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much changes in the second novel in the series by Poul and Karen Anderson, *Gallicenae*.

Having recently been in Brittany—in fact, having read *Gallicenae* there—I boned up on the legend of Ys. (It might be noted that the ancient culture of Brittany, and its language, are much more akin to those of Wales and Cornwall than to France.) It goes something like this. The legendary city on the Breton western coast of rocks, cliffs, and incredible tides was very wicked indeed, and known for its towers and beauty in general (Paris, in local legend, is called "Par-Ys"—like Ys). Good King Gradlon did his best, but his dissolute daughter Dahut made alliance with the devil (remember that the devil stood for anything pagan in those days).

Ys was protected from the great tides of the Channel by a cleverly wrought dike, the key to which the King always carried. Dahut, urged by the devil, stole the key, opened the sea gate, and drowned the town. It survives on the sea bottom (its bells still heard on spooky nights), and will only cease to be cursed when Mass is celebrated in one of its churches. Dahut survives as a sort of Breton siren, luring sailors to watery deaths. Gradlon escaped, and continued to rule with the help of St. Corentine, who lived as a hermit on one miraculous fish, which the good Saint would take a slice of every night, but which would turn up alive and whole again the next day.

The Andersons have cleverly expanded and historically justified the legend. Ys is an ancient Phoenician settlement dedicated to a complicated trilogy of pagan gods. In the traditional ritual, kingship is assumed by the killing of the incumbent king; not only is the crown then gained, but the nine queens, dedicated to Belisama-Ishtar, are also inherited. The above-mentioned Gratillonius, a Roman army centurion, has done just that. This is set in the time when the Empire is collapsing and Christianity (and its attendant theological squabbles) is taking over. Gratillonius (who is to be, of course, good King Gradlon) is a follower of Mithra. So he must juggle his own (dying) religion, the pagan one of Ys, and encroaching Christianity (which frowns on both the other two, of course), as well as his allegiance to Rome and his growing devotion to Ys and its people (not to mention the nine wives).

Gallicenae mostly concerns the deteriorating political situation, in which Ys is inevitably involved, and the growing up of Dahut. She is Gratillonius's daughter by his favorite of the Nine, who died in childbirth. Dahut is dedicated to the old religion, a dedication implanted by her nine foster mothers, (her own mother having been replaced immediately after her death) who also teach her what remains of their witch skills. She's beautiful, of course, but obviously is going to turn out to be the sort of girl who'd inundate the town to have

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her own way—*not* the most appealing of heroines.

As in the first book, the fantasy elements are few. In addition to the sparse powers of the Nine, St. Corentine (here Corentinus) shows up with his magically filleted fish, and the pagan and Christian "magic" clash—somehow it seems wrong that both sides should have accepted miracles (i.e. two magical systems coming from different sources is a problem in coherent fantasy). And I haven't even mentioned the Irish crowd, who keep turning up in a sort of subplot (to eventually collide with the main plot, presumably), and the powers of *their* bards (as well as a host of the usual quarrelsome heroes of Irish tradition—all absolutely indistinguishable from one another).

Those caveats aside, however, the series continues to be an intriguing reconstruction of a legendary time and place that hasn't been overused, a welcome change from the repetitious fantasies we've been flooded with so much lately.

The Fairy Feller

The Grey Horse
By R. A. MacAvoy
Bantam, $3.95 (paper)

The púca (more commonly Anglicized as "pooka") is one of the jollier entities of myth (Irish, in case you didn't know), but would you want your daughter (or sister) to marry one?

As it happens, Máire NíStandún's stepfather and sister are not happy about the matter. They don't *know* that Ruairí MacEibhir is a púca. Sean Standun knows that Ruairí stepped on his foot and broke it during an eviction-resistance fracas led by Máire. Eibhlín Standún knows that Ruairí is an exceedingly attractive chap, and all such belong to her because she's the pretty one of the two sisters (though 'tis indeed a problem that he's only the second stable boy out at Anraí O Reachtaire's).

In R. A. MacAvoy's novel, *The Grey Horse*, the time is the late nineteenth century (Parnell has just been imprisoned by the English). And the fairy feller has come to the small village of Carraroe specifically to court Máire because she's one of the few ladies (if not the only) in Ireland to have fairy blood. (Her paternity is a guarded family secret.)

Several people *do* know that Ruairí is a púca, and while they may not take it for granted, they certainly don't question the fact. Old Anraí, expert with horses, had more or less brought this stray home ('twas the other way around really), and when the horse turned into a man, he and his wife made the best of it. Máire knows Ruairí's true nature, after a moonlit ride, and refuses him, partially because he's not a Christian. It's made known to the local priest when he's approached to baptize a fairy, a problem he's not dealt with before.

The effect of the púca on the village (and the village on the púca) is the sum and substance of this slight but delightful novel. It rises

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above a whimsical Celtic romp for several reasons. The characters are varied and neatly drawn, and there is authentic drama in their interplay with the fairy (the death of one of the major characters is truly moving, though Ruairí's entrance into the funeral mass as a horse lightens the mood somewhat). One really cares whether Ruairí will win Máire. There are awesome mythological implications in Ruairí's past—he was born on the day that Pádraig the Bishop (St. Patrick) landed for the second time in Éirinn. And MacAvoy has avoided all the cutesy Irish clichés with which that admirable folk have been burdened in this country. The Irish charm and wit are there in plenty (particularly with the púca; Ruairí is a heartbreaker), but they are the *real* Irish charm and wit, not the stale imitations.

American Alternate

Seventh Son

By Orson Scott Card
Tor, $17.95

George Washington, Lord Potomac, beheaded in the war against King Robert? Aaron Burr, governor of Susquehanna, killed in a duel by Daniel Boone? The Indian "nation" of Irrakwa the seventh state of seven in the American Compact?

It's some alternate American history that Orson Scott Card has laid out for the background of *Seventh Son*. (Despite all the historical stuff we've had lately, playing with American history is still rare—SF and fantasy authors seem to go for more exotic times and places.) Its branch point isn't specified, but it's not *that* much earlier than the time of the novel (just after the turn of the nineteenth century, possibly); a lot of familiar people are present, though in slightly different circumstances, as you can guess from the above examples. The split could well be somewhere around the English Civil War, since there's still a Lord Protector in England, and the Royalist Cavaliers seem to be centered in the American South (from its capital, Camelot).

There's another big difference, however. All the wonderful folk superstitions of frontier America, such as hexing, potions, and charms, have been gathered into a workable system of magic? science? whatever. Anyhow, it gets results, and is prevalent in America because most of its practitioners have been driven there from Puritan England.

I'd like to go on a bit about Card's wonderful alternative history and the story he's laid against it, something about a frontier family way out in Wobbish Territory and its next-to-youngest son, who is the seventh of a seventh, which gives him extraordinary powers. But I'm afraid I must use the space to do something I almost never do—raise a question of principle. *Seventh Son* isn't a novel, it's a fragment. It doesn't break off at a cliffhanger, like the components of *The Lord of the Rings*, or come to a demi-climax, like those of *The Saga of Pli-*

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ocene Exile (both good examples of how to handle a series if one *must* have a series). It just stops. Nowhere in the bound galley I was sent or on the accompanying dust jacket is there any indication that this is the first of a series. (It is, of course.)

Now there are very sound economic reasons that publishers must publish certain books at certain lengths for certain prices, involving authors' royalties and many other things. And there are equally sound artistic reasons (though possibly more flexible) why authors want to write their stories at a certain length. But surely some sort of common sense can be brought to the current situation, where it seems every other novel one reads ends with at least an implied "to be continued . . ." The serialized novel has an honorable place in SF history: back in the magazine era, anything longer than a novelette was published as a serial. But there were three differences back then: the reader only had to wait a month or two between episodes; s/he only had to pay a quarter for them; and every serial was so labeled, so that it was up to you as to whether you wanted to read the story in fragments.

Good Better Bester

The Stars My Destination

By Alfred Bester
Franklin Watts, $15.95

The word classic doesn't mean much any more, since it's tossed about all too freely. Apropos of science fiction, it's particularly iffy, since for the most part that genre has existed only since the beginning of this century (discounting some precursor works—Verne, early Wells), which means *our* classics don't even have the weight of a hundred years on them. (An interesting comparison can be made to movies, whose span of existence is very close to the same.)

Nevertheless, over what years there have been, certain works have stood out as—call them what you will—landmarks? milestones? turning points? Many of those are the high points of an author's body of work, i.e., *Childhood's End* is the best of a lot of good Clarke. But despite brilliant work by Le Guin since, *The Left Hand of Darkness* was a novel without which SF would probably have taken a different path, a turning point indeed. Another such was Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination*. Readers with long memories won't forget the jolt they received on reading it serialized in *Galaxy*, and those with shorter spans still won't forget the first time they read it.

Now in most fields classics remain available. Can you imagine not being able to find the Beethoven 5th on record? Or a reproduction of "The Raft of the Medusa"? Or *Tom Jones* being out of print? But SF seems to be different. And don't just blame the publishers—they have to make a *little* profit when they republish something, and apparently the current mass of SF readers just aren't that in-

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terested in retro gold—or don't recognize it when it does reappear.

For whatever reason, *The Stars My Destination* has been unavailable for several years. Now we have it, at least, in hard-cover. If you haven't read it, beg, borrow, or even (gasp!) buy a copy. What's it about? For once, I'll simply say read it and find out.

Recent publications from those associated with this magazine include: *The Year's Best Science Fiction: Fourth Annual Collection* edited by Gardner Dozois (St. Martin's Press, $11.95, paper).

Books to be considered for review in this column should be submitted to Baird Searles, Suite 133, 380 Bleecker St., N.Y., N.Y. 10014. ●

NEXT ISSUE

Nuclear Winter is one of the most controversial topics in modern science, and next issue Nebula-and-Hugo winner **ROBERT SILVERBERG** takes us to a future Earth frozen deep in such a Winter's icy heart, in our January cover story, "At Winter's End." *This* Winter has lasted for thousands and thousands of years, since last the rogue Deathstars swept through our solar system in one of their cyclical, 26-million-year passes, bombarding the Earth with displaced asteroids, raising vast clouds of dust to shut away the sun. Now the Winter is almost over, Spring is coming at last, after uncounted millennia, and a handful of survivors must emerge from their deep bunkers to face a strangely-altered Earth, an Earth full of strange terrors and wonders, an Earth full of strange creatures working out stranger destinies, an Earth that may no longer have room for humankind... Don't miss this vivid novella, Silverberg at his evocative best.

Also in our jam-packed January issue: **MICHAEL BISHOP** returns after a long absence with a fascinating study of a young Ute Indian girl's strange search for something beyond the life we know, in "The Calling of Paisley Coldpony"; **PAT CADIGAN** gives us an errie, passionate, and terrifying look at the high cost of being "My Brother's Keeper"; Nebula-and-Hugo winner **CONNIE WILLIS** delivers a stinging, razor-edged satire about the future of education, in "Ado"; **RICHARD PAUL RUSSO** examines a widening high-tech gap between two very unusual lovers, in "Listen To My Heartbeat"; and **TERENCE M. GREEN** and **ANDREW WEINER** join their considerable talents to detail for us the "Twenty-Two Steps to the Apocalypse"... and a bizarre and frightening journey it is, too. Plus an array of columns and features. Look for the January issue on your newsstands on December 15, 1987.

COMING SOON: major new stories by **HARRY TURTLEDOVE, ORSON SCOTT CARD, NANCY KRESS, LUCIUS SHEPARD, JACK DANN, NEAL BARRETT, Jr., JUDITH MOFFETT, AVRAM DAVIDSON, LISA GOLDSTEIN,** and many others.

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SF CONVENTIONAL CALENDAR

by Erwin S. Strauss

Lots of con(vention)s before and after the holiday lull. Plan now for social weekends with your favorite SF authors, editors, artists, and fellow fans. For a longer, later list, an explanation of cons, & a sample of SF folksongs, send me an SASE (addressed, stamped #10 (business) envelope) at 4271 Duke St. #D-10, Alexandria VA 22304. The hot line is (703) 823-3117. If a machine answers, leave your area code & number. I'll call back on my nickel. Early evening's often a good time to phone cons (many numbers are homes). Be polite on the phone. When writing, enclose an SASE. Look for me at cons behind the iridescent Filthy Pierre badge making keyboard music.

NOVEMBER, 1987

6-8—**SciCon.** For info, write: **Box 9434, Hampton Roads VA 23451.** Or call: **(703) 823-3117** (10 am to 10 pm, not collect). Con will be held in: Virginia Beach VA (if city omitted, same as in address) at Sheraton Beach Inn. Guests will include: Larry (Ringworld) Niven, artist P. Craig (Elric) Russell.

6-8—**WindyCon.** The big annual Chicagoland SF con. No details at press time (call the hot line).

6-8—**BeNeLuxCon.** Carlton Beach Hotel, Scheveningen Netherlands. The Little Three's regular affair.

6-8—**SF Festival, % Club 2001, 20 Vapzarov St., Plovdiv 4000, Bulgaria. 032-25778.** Let's hop over.

13-15—**OryCon. (503) 283-0802.** Red Lion Inn Columbia River, Portland OR. Powers. Kube-McDowell.

13-15—**EarthCon. (216) 529-1940.** Holiday Inn Westlake, Cleveland OH. R. M. Meluch, Michael Banks.

13-15—**PhilCon.** Adam's Mark, Philadelphia PA. The oldest SF con. Silverberg, Zahn, Hildebrandt.

13-15—**ConAwha, % VSFG, Box 5501, Charleston WV 25361.** "Sgt. V Want You!" No more info.

20-22—**SMOFCon, 376 Colonial Ave., Worthington OH 43085.** Columbus OH. Fen who run cons talk shop.

27-29—**LosCon, 11513 Burbank Blvd., N. Hollywood CA 91605.** Pasadena CA. LA SF Society big do.

27-29—**Darkover Grand Council Meeting, Box 8113, Silver Spring MD 20907.** Sold out; write re 1988.

DECEMBER, 1987

4-6—**TropiCon, 4427 Royal Palm Ave., Miami Beach, FL 33307.** Ft. Lauderdale FL.G. R. R. Martin. A good excuse to go south now.

6-8—**CzarKon, 1156 Remley Ct., University City MO 63130. (314) 725-6488.** Eureka MO. Adults only.

JANUARY, 1988

1-3—**EveCon, Box 128, Aberdeen MD 21001. (301) 422-1235.** Crystal City VA (by Washington, D.C.).

8-10—**HexaCon, 556 Kingwood-Locktown Rd., Flemington NJ 08822.** Lancaster PA. Ben Bova, M. Kaye.

FEBRUARY, 1988

12-14—**Boskone, Box G, MIT PO, Cambridge MA 02139. (617) 625-2311.** (Springfield MA. Greg Bear, D. Mattingly, E. Asher. Limited to about half 1987's 4000. Advance sellout possible. Call or write.

SEPTEMBER, 1988

1-5—**NoLaCon II, 921 Canal #831, New Orleans LA 70112. (504) 525-6008.** WorldCon $60 in 1987.

AUGUST, 1989

31-Sep. 4—**Noreascon 3, Box 46, MIT PO, Cambridge MA 02139.** Boston MA. 1989 World Con.

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ART BY FRANK FRAZETTA

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